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THE
MESSAGE AND MINISTRATIONS
OF

DEWAN BAHADUR

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W. K. Rahman.

UNTO
FELLOW-MOURNERS ALL OVER

V. R.
(amid the shadows)

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OM!

GURUDEVATASRADDHANGATARPANAM*

“Tears flow from my eyes — let them flow round your feet in worship”. Be this for me—now no more and no other than a sore-afflicted mourner—the *tarpanam* of *jalanjali* offered as it falls due, at a most solemn hour, out of the fulness of filial affection, reverence and gratitude. Hot, burning tears; yet hallowed, beatific tears—let them flow freely on and swell into a current full enough to suffuse and baptise the whole being now melting and merging into all the sister tributaries of honour and homage from fellow-mourners far and near. Every drop of the heart's life-blood teeming with the red corpuscles of revitalised sentiment—let it multiply into the manifold amplitude of the sacred Ganges stream for a pious obsequial offering. Every vacant look, every deep-drawn sigh, every hard-repressed cry, every mumbling mutter, every broken burst of word, every random reflection, every deliberate thought, every haunting reminiscence—oh, let them string themselves together, as variegated flowers, into a votive wreath of devout veneration. And every whisper of a sound from without, whether of Mother-Nature's waft or of Brother-Man's voice—let it go, too, to chime in with the holy *mantra* of the sacrament of mourning. Only, even out of lively, timely regard for his own oft-repeated citation,

*In connection with the *Adyasraddha* on the tenth day of the Ascension.

“ may there be no moaning of the bar,
 When I put out to sea !’,
 hushed be, once and for all, the faintest echo of any-
 thing like a mere moping, morbid, melancholy moan
 void of faith and hope. Let there prevail naught but
 the resounding peal of sorrow consecrated by renovated
 faith and confirmed by reinforced hope—‘ Lost in God,
 in Godhead found.’

Unto whom or what is the *tarpanam* of this mo-
 ment of moments to be ? Is it to what has been left
 behind as the never-to-be-effaced mental image of a
 frame finely fashioned, out of military clay, into stal-
 wart strength and shapeliness beyond the ordinary run
 and endued with a fund of vigour baulking all the ravages
 of habitual self-neglect ? Is it to the mighty mind in
 him—that vast laboratory of dynamic ideas impressed
 with the clearest stamp of the sublime and the beauti-
 ful ? Is it to the pair of speaking, sparkling eyes in him—
 that dual apparatus of the telescope and the microscope
 with its unerring grasp alike of the remote and the
 minute in things ? Is it to that twain of divinely-touch-
 ed lips in him which never moved but to discourse
 seraphic music in strains of matchless eloquence ? Is
 it to the titanic stature of the scholar in him which
 gave his intellect its acknowledged primacy in the com-
 monwealth of letters ? Is it to the born teacher in
 him whose delight was ever to purvey the richest viands
 of *vijnana* under the welcome coating of *jnana* ? Is it
 to the guide, philosopher and friend in him whose blend
 of sagacity and generosity—a very plenitude of ready

effective resource in tact and tenderness—was never found unequal to the most baffling of emergencies whether in individual careers or in institutional conditions? Yes, indeed. The *tarpanam* of the day, the hour and the moment is to all these interestingly impressive features of that strikingly singular personality which has cast off the burden of flesh and assumed the robe of the spirit before these weeping eyes and these aching hearts. But the *tarpanam* is also to much more in him than all these gifts and glories grouped together. Were they all, its tidal wave of emotion would not rise to the flood-level it now and here surges up to from within.

What, then? The *tarpanam* is also to the affluence of still higher distinguishing marks and much more precious traits that have carried with them a fadeless fascination for over a half-century and a half-decade out of the seven and seventy years now broken off unrounded. It is to what shone forth as more than man in the man—even the woman in the man; the very soul of intense, intimate, homely affection and concern which made of him a ministering angel for every species of pain and anguish and a mother-reveller in the caresses and embraces of sweet love for its own sacred sake. It is to the child in the man who would not merely suffer little children to come unto him without let or hindrance but was never more happy than when himself going out into their blessed and blissful presence with love and hilarity. It is to the self-convicting sinner behind the saint in him who was, at the same time, only too overjoyed to discern and draw out the hidden

saint in the discredited sinner. It is to the genuine man of God, within the apparently genial, jovial man of social intercourse, whose inmost heart's systole and diastole constantly typified to him the correlated processes of aspiration and inspiration in the life spiritual. It is to what in him corresponded to the *bhakta* whose intuitive urge finds love in huts where poor men lie. It is to the counterpart in him answering to the *drashta* with the X-ray vision of an inner eye enlightened by daily teachers in woods and rills. It is to what reproduced in him the *muni* with a cosmic consciousness reposing in the silence that is in the starry sky. It is to the spirit of 'alone to the Alone' communion which reflected in him the rapt absorption of the *yogi* in the sleep that is among the lonely hills. Thus and thus and thus, the *tarpanam* is, in one word, to 'the human-divine man I knew,' to him whom it has been vouchsafed to me and to us to claim as my own and our own and to acclaim as a truly Godlikeman amongst us—Godlike in ways too far-reaching to trace and with aspects too manifold to compute—one of those on whom, as foremost on God Himself, the race of man builds its trust.

Then, as the *tarpanam* rendered is one of soul-deep gratitude for the legacy of a life beyond appraisal, it shall be, as it has, alas, to be, the *tarpanam* also of heart-heavy penitence over a darksome past of untold lapses from filial devotion and faithful discipleship. And how that writhing sense of contrition must break the spirit the more, even because the tenderest forgiveness

there would always forestall the direst misdemeanour here in the lowering of the flag, the staining of the escutcheon, the rifting of the lute and many another like act of grievous personal hurt conscious or unconscious, overt or covert!

Furthermore, if only to save the self from the delusive reactions of empty plaudit and vain repining, oh, let the *tarpanam* receive every measure of needful enrichment in value and validity through an inflow of the potency of a new-made covenant sealed in blood. Be that covenant the earnest pledge and promise of refreshed loyalty to the enshrined memory in the shape of revived love for the gracious message and of re-consecrated labour for the glorious mission during the days that yet open out ahead. So shall the *tarpanam* again and again serve to fulfil itself as an acceptable sacrifice upon the altar of the *Dharma* and the *Sangha* which have found in him their rarest ornament and which shall stand evermore nearest and dearest unto his disembodied self. And so, indeed, shall the *aseesh* from above and the *tarpanam* from below seek each other out to commingle in healing grace for the afflicted and in heavenly peace for the emancipated.

Now, as in solemn duty bound, the *tarpanam* of renewed reverence, repentance and reconsecration shall reach forth as well to the whole family of spiritual forbears—in the triple degree of *vasu*, *rudra* and *aditya roopas* (*pita*, *pitamaha* and *prapitamaha*) and further back in proud pedigree :

"*Amadgurubhyyonnamastarpayami tarpayami tarpayami.*"

"*Guru paramaguru parameshthiguru parapagurubhyyonnamastarpayami tarpayami tarpayami.*"

V. RAMAKRISHNA RAO

o m !

INTRODUCTION

Providence, in His inscrutable decree, has, alas, necessitated the most melancholy of new conditions in the ushering in of the present Volume. That simple word of awful significance, 'late', has had, for the first time, to be prefixed in the mind to the ever-dear, ever-honoured name upon the Title-page. The Dedicatory sheet, missing the old inimitable touches of tenderness in inscription, has had to be taken over for a sympathetic throb in unison with the soul-stirrings of a wide, vast circle of 'mourners' far and near, known and unknown. And, in between that and the customary Introduction, space has had to be found for the outpourings of '*Sraddhanga-tarpanam*' from a riven, writhing heart harrowed up by the affliction of a loss all too personal with effects poignant beyond estimation, beyond assuagement. Just a fortnight after the happiness of the last Birth-day (in 1938), now so pregnant with a sombre interest of its own in the retrospect, there began a period of intense suffering for both body and mind through a sudden attack of glaucoma in the eye attended with a slow-sure decline in the general tone. And the solemn entry into Bliss Divine came in the still, small hours of *brahma-muhoortam* at the break of the Twenty-sixth of May, 1939, henceforth sanctified for all time by the transfiguration of every earthly association.

"What he is now we know not ! He will be
 A beautiful likeness of the God that gave
 Him work to do, which he did do so well."

When, oh, when shall it be given to the despairing and
 the disconsolate left behind to exclaim with waxing
 trust and waning grief,

"I bless Thee for the wonder of Thy mercy,
 Which softeneth the Mystery and the Parting" ?

Down the vale of years, the quartet of milestones
 passed by after the issue of the preceding Volume witnessed little of external incident in the strictly personal career. Whatever stirring distractions and even saddening occurrences entailed a severe impact from proximate surroundings, they, in effect, tended to a deepening of the realisation that in the self alone lies the true inwardness of circumstance. And as for the physical tenement of that self, a vivid consciousness of what has been happily called 'the glorious bondage of illness' bore up the infirmities of the valetudinarian until overpowered altogether by the excruciating agonies of flesh. Thus, through the varying storms of tribulation mostly vicarious in character, the sturdy oak of close upon seventy and seven winters maintained intact its leafing vigour in the life spiritual. So that mellow autumn found it as rich as ever in the sweetness of red-ripe fruit. Not merely a genius in the common intellectual acceptance of the term, the finely attempered spirit continued to reflect, in an exceptional measure and manner, the superior genius also of godliness and goodness in one. As cause and consequence alike of this outstanding feature,

the inner life kept moving upon high elevations within reach of the fountains whence the soul is fed without failure. So it is that you still come upon great watersheds of refreshing thought and sentiment profitably drained into the compass of a half-hour's concentrated utterance. So, too, ever nearest to the truth of the heart within, the sun so generous of his beams of love is seen to shine nearest to the hearts of others as well. It is as it should be, then, that those of commoner clay and calibre cannot be slow to read a luminous epistle of continued grace not in the spoken word alone but, far more exquisitely and explicitly, in the spirit-language of the life itself with its own interior 'message and ministrations' of piety and benignity. In the contemplation of such gently genial yet effectively redemptive beneficence as though from out of an underworld of silence, the mind questing after parallels turns spontaneously to 'the realms of gold' in the ideal world of purposive fiction. And there, with intent delight, it ponders over the superb beauty of the liberalising, regenerating and sanctifying influence, respectively, of, say, Henry Grey on Robert Elsmere, of Bishop Bienvenu on Jean Valjean, and of Paresh Chandra Bhattacharya on the whole group of characters in *Gora*. And the ultimate secret of the spell of this vital potency readily discloses itself in Rabindranath's own expressive formula: "Because of the union with the Supreme which Paresh Babu's life consistently sought, his mind was always turned towards what was best and truest ; worldly concerns had never been able to become predominant for him." Into this one affirmation is distilled the essence

of that whole philosophy of the higher life with which the following pages will be found occupied under the four accustomed heads.

Before proceeding to a cursory comment upon the total merit as also the varied content of the said pages, it may be permitted, as a helpful preliminary and in accordance with wonted practice, to cite at this point some of the representative notices with which the present Volume's immediate predecessor was received before in different quarters. Of "the thoughts of a great mind" treasured up in it as well as of its Author, *The Guardian*, a Christian Weekly Journal of Public Affairs in Madras, thus delivered itself in unqualified appreciation: "Sir R. Venkataratnam, the well-known educationist and ex-Vice-Chancellor of Madras University, has even greater fame as a leader of the Brahmo Samaj and as a social reformer. His service in the latter respects was pioneering efforts and propagating ideas some decades ago when social and religious interests took a secondary place in public thought. A later generation which honours him now gets the benefit of his teachings through this volume. Sir R. Venkataratnam's addresses at marriage ceremonies, his talks at educational institutions and during religious celebrations, combine ancient wisdom with modern outlook. Notable in this way are the exhortations to newly wedded couples which add to the sacramental temper the most rational ideals of marriage. The talk on Islam reveals his breadth of mind and his understanding of a religion which to the common man is the foe of Hinduism.

All the addresses breathe dignity and seriousness.' The reviewer in *Sadhu T. L. Vaswanji's Magazine, East and West* of Hyderabad (Sind), recognised the sermons, in particular, to be "such as to raise one gently to the celestial heights" and observed as follows upon some of the specific aspects of the publication :—"The close relation of religion and politics has been clearly brought out in the address on God and Democracy ; and it has been further exemplified in three of the succeeding addresses. The speaker's ideal is that 'God is the God of the people ; and, therefore, the people should be dealt with and respected as we should deal with and respect the Deity.' Among the subjects of academical interest are the Welcome Address to the Delegates of the Economic Conference and two 'educational exhortations,' one to students and the other to teachers. The basis of a true culture, he says, consists 'in soundness of learning, judgment and conduct'. He regards the teacher as a 'custodian of the future worker and citizen', having, as such, a responsible duty to perform for the benefit of the future.—The services and sermons and the prayers and meditations which form the second and the third sections respectively of the book, are profoundly devotional and enable one to transport oneself to the higher realms of thought. They exercise a supreme influence over the mind bewildered by the vicissitudes of life and inspire one to adhere to the path of duty. Last but not the least important are the appreciations and reminiscences—the deliberation of diverse personalities and the exposition of their religious principles in a liberal spirit. Glowing tributes have been paid to

the leaders of religions thought without any prejudices of a sectarian nature.—This book is an exposition of the religious principles of the Brahma Samaj and is bound to impress the 'votaries of spiritual theism and of practical idealism'. In a limpid and elegant style the author brings home even to the mind of a layman the 'miracle of Divine Compassion' and impels him to lead the life of piety and devotion and to be pure in mind and heart. The immortal relation between the human and the Divine has been well brought out in the elucidation of the Monistic philosophy of Sankara. As quoted by the author echoing the *Sivanandalahari*, 'As the seed of the *ankola* tree attains the original stalk, as the needle attains the magnet, as the devout wife attains the honoured lord, as the creeper attains the tree',... 'so the soul seeks repose in, and finds its fullest existence in, the contemplation of, and devotion to, God'. He looks upon the incidents of daily life through the glass of spiritualism which gives a reflection of the perpetual presence of One True God.—The Editor, in his characteristically scholarly introduction, throws a lucid light upon the author and his previous messages, and prepares the way for the proper perspective of the present volume. These messages are the ripe fruits of a matured mind and are well worth preserving in such forms as this to be profitably shared 'by the fellow-seekers of truth and holiness'." A further specimen of the warmest reception accorded in directly Theistic circles was the testimony of Prof. Dr. Kalidas Nag, M. A., D. Litt., in the columns of *The Modern Review* of Calcutta : " The learned editor has earned the best thanks of the students

of serious literature by publishing this, the latest (sixth) volume of the works of Sir Venkata Ratnam. The septuagenary of this sage of Andhradesa was celebrated with due solemnity in October 1932 and we remembered the great services he rendered to the Motherland as the Principal of Pittapur Rajah's College, Cocanada, as the Vice-Chancellor, University of Madras, and as the initiator of so many beneficial activities. But the mainspring of his life is a passionate faith in God manifesting through the Brahmo Samaj; and in every bit of his thought and action, one catches the spark of his burning faith. He made a profound study of the Bibles of Humanity, as we find in his 'Theistic Synthesis' (1932), 'God and Democracy' (1929) and such other writings. 'The Triple Standard of Higher Education' (1929) and similar papers show him as a master-teacher; and the catholicity of his culture is attested by his brilliant study on 'Jalaluddin Rumi'. The Introductory Note by the Editor brings out admirably the abiding character of the life of this 'Brahmarshi' of Andhra; and his inspiring address on the Silver Jubilee of the Pittapur Installation (1931) brings back to our mind that the noble and cultured Maharajah of Pithapuram is a lifelong admirer of Sir Venkata Ratnam, whose dedicated life inspired the Maharajah to initiate and develop some of the best humanitarian institutions of the State, e. g., the splendid Orphanage of Cocanada. As one goes through the pages, the voice of the Sage seems to speak distinctly, 'There is God in Nature in epic grandeur, there is God in the Human Soul in lyric sweetness and there is God in History in dramatic

impressiveness'.—We recommend the book to all who aspire to follow the history of Modern Indian idealism.' Again, *The Indian Messenger*, the organ of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj of Calcutta, came out with the subjoined commendation from the prolific pen of Principal Braja Sundar Roy, M. A., B. L. "This volume, like its predecessors, is a valuable addition to the Theistic literature that has grown in this land of Rishis since the days of Rajah Rammohun Roy. The peculiarity and novelty of this literature has not yet been noticed by the general public because of their preoccupation with the secular concerns of life. Otherwise, the volumes of 'Message and Ministrations' would have by this time occupied a much more prominent place in the intellectual intercourse of the educated section of our countrymen.—The esteemed, learned and devout editor, inspired by the true Indian spirit of discipleship for his venerable master, rightly and most deservedly honoured as a Brahmarshi, is entitled to our best thanks and gratitude for preserving and giving to the world the wisdom and lessons falling from the lips of the latter. We cannot but think in this connection of Plato's Dialogues and of our greatest books that were all, most probably, preserved in memory by the disciples of the Rishis, and so their authorship has been involved in darkness and oblivion. These two souls appear to be perfectly akin and spiritually united, though living in separate bodies, and serve as models for the relationship that should subsist between the Acharyas and the congregations under their ministration.—As regards the value of the book, to add anything

to the elaborate preface of the editor, in which a beautiful and complete exposition of the teachings has been given, would be an act of supererogation; yet in compliance with his request, a brief but humble appreciation of the benefits accrued from their perusal may be recorded. The Brahmarshi, whether speaking at political, educational or religious gatherings, delivered his messages with a vivid sense of his existence in God, whose mouthpiece he seems to be like the prophets of old. Every word and every sentence that comes out from him is tinged with, and enlivened by, a living faith in the personality of God, for whom his love and reverence know no bounds. His words inspire faith and love, and enable us to see God where others see only matter and carnality. His prayers on birth-days, at namakaran ceremonies, or at marriages, are unique in their lofty spiritual tone and outlook. He extorts the admiration of the reader by the freshness of his expressions, their eloquence and exuberance. He handles the English language with an ease and mastery that is rare even among writers whose mother-tongue it is. Students of this language will gain much by devoting their attention to the combinations of words that are often surprisingly new. He deserves to be read and re-read both for the matter and the manner of his thoughts. The originality of such a teacher creates originality in the disciple. May God prolong the life and vigour of these two beloved sons of His, from whom we eagerly look forward for similar other volumes to enrich the literature of the Brahma Samaj ! — In conclusion, we may draw our readers' attention

to certain discourses that impressed us the most. The section 'Prayers and Meditations' will supply food for daily reading to the devout. The 'Services and Sermons' also, specially 'The Leper's Bride and Romney's Remorse,' '*Pavanam*' and 'The Pilgrim Soul,' have deep lessons for us. The Brahmarshi's pure soul considers the universe as the *Pavanamurti* of God. He sees all things as 'twined into one string, one eternal, indestructible tie of sanctity as between Thee and ourselves.' His appreciation of the Islamic mystics, Jalaluddin Rumi and other Sufis, clearly indicates the depth of his mysticism. He has, like our great Rajah, made an excellent use of his knowledge of Persian by drinking deep at the fountain-head of Sufi mysticism. He is no less in union, by his love, with the God of Transcendence; and the sentence, 'My *me* is God, I know not myself except in Him'—the declaration of St. Catherine of Genoa—implies the 'Union in Love' that has been attained by him. His is 'a life of absolute identification with God'. He understands by experience the meaning of '*Baqa bad ul fana*'—life in the Truth after the annihilation of the self. He says: 'This is Sufi Theism; and in this doctrine of the highest spiritual value, our Brahmo Theism is in perfect agreement with Sufi Theism.' A familiar old admirer in the Western latitudes, the Rev. Dr. Rosslyn Bruce, D. D., F. L. S., of Sussex, conveyed, as usual, a glowing tribute in a communication to the Maharajah Sahib of Pithapuram. "Sir Venkata," he wrote, "has surpassed his former inspiring messages; in this volume one delights in the practical and constructive line of progress

which lies behind his powerful and beautiful use of purest English : on the subject of democracy, he reminds one of the little *bon-mot*:

‘ Two men look out from prison bars ;
One sees the mud, and one the stars !’

His terse, familiar illustrations, too, are arresting and convincing and eminently on the lines of the Lord Jesus’ method of teaching His twofold message of the Fatherhood of God and consequent Immortality of (His Spirit in) man. —I have read the 450 pages of this treasured volume, many of them more than once.” Lastly, the fear of prolixity of quotation leaves room for no more than one little extract from an interesting letter of 19-2-’36 from our late lamented leader in Calcutta, Principal Dr. Heramba Chandra Maitra, M. A., D. Litt., in fond reference to his own express wish and hope, frustrated in the end by failing health, to be able some day to honour the Volume himself with a close review such as he felt it eminently deserved. Said the letter to the Editor, “ What I can do is to draw attention to its importance and value in some articles in *The Indian Messenger*, and I hope you will kindly accept that as my humble tribute to the renowned author—my revered and beloved friend and fellow-worker in the great cause of the Brahmo Samaj.”

Now, the prospective reader of this, the Seventh Volume, may well carry as a ‘ brought forward account’ to its perusal the whole of the foregoing appraisal of the Sixth. To the serious-minded section of the reading public, the present addition to a valued series is

offered in the assured hope that it will not fail to commend itself as a fair approach to the standard set by Ruskin: "No book is worth anything that is not worth much ; nor is it serviceable until it has been read and re-read, and loved and loved again". One more repository of the life-blood of a master-spirit, it is calculated to take its place among such classics as provide somewhat of the inspiration of Uncle Tom's favourite scripture "whose words, like ingots of gold, seem often to need to be weighed separately, that the mind may take in their precious value." Taken at the right assessment, the many substantial (if occasional) utterances here compiled constitute at once a self-revealing and a spiritually illuminating collection. And they go far to dissipate the possibility of any lurking suspicion that the oracle may have long since spoken itself out. Wherever one may turn, one is sure to browse upon pasturage of rare succulence by virtue equally of theme and treatment. The deep things of the spirit bubbling up and touching reality at ever so many points ; the uniformly impressive accents of thorough-going sincerity stressed with all the force of penetrating insight, intensive meditation and immediate experience ; the wealth of imagery and illustration, as of idea and information, never at a loss for the aptest phrase, fact or fancy to lend point to the truth under elucidation — these fascinating qualities, in brief, amply sustain the thoughtful reader's pre-existing sense of high indebtedness. As before, so now, to read, mark and inwardly digest these viands will be to banquet on heavenly manna for such as would not simply fatten on earthly meat. So long as every ray of

real light must make a welcome guest in a world of besetting gloom, it is everything to the Editor, for his humble part, to be spared, though after the lapse of quite a quadrennium, from defaulting further on his self-enjoined but none the less sacred obligation in this behalf. Nothing on the human side but a dogged pertinacity of purpose could have overcome the immense obstacles in the way. Foremost among these in the time gone by was an oft-repeated renewal of dissuasion by the Master himself on many a shifting ground. "All to secure some usefulness for a useless life!" "Nay, wholly to share with a wider circle the certain treasures of usefulness of a more than ordinarily useful life in the highest of zones". So the variance in estimates would go on from time to time between the one and the other. And what with such characteristic underrating of his own performances and what with the work being indefinitely crowded out by ever so many preoccupations and what with the gradual ebbing away of all physical energy in him, it has so turned out that the whole of the raw material, got ready so early as soon after the publication of the Sixth Volume, never did receive the least benefit of longed-for touching up at the hands of the Master. Even as regards the selection of contents for these new Volumes, he could (or would) only renew the old unfettered sanction with the same old excess of generosity: "I will not interfere with your decision to let in whatever you pronounce to be passable. The reputation of these volumes — that is, the credit claimable for him whose name they assume — is, under Providence, entrusted to *your care*."

(19-5-1938). And that was the sole, solitary occasion when the mind ever turned upon the aspect of so-called 'reputation' at all.

This Volume begins practically where the last one ended in the superb exposition of "the very fundamentals of the Sufi faith or, rather, of Sufi experience." The pride of place thus given to that theme of themes must derive sufficient warrant from the recollection of how thoroughly the Master's own spirit was ever steeped in the serene atmosphere of the Moslem Mystics with their psychologically systematised disciplines and their fruitfully beatific attainment in the direction of "not merely union with God but unitive life with God." Little wonder that he could not shake off an acute sense of supposed inadequacy in his casual commendation of a subject which really lay so close to his bosom and in which he was so much at home himself. Here are revealing side-lights from letters elicited by entreaties for speeding up a long-desired yet equally long-deferred revision of the Discourse in question: "The theme is of supreme significance—the Descent of God and the ascent of man; and it would be culpable to deny to it the humble best that a sincere believer in its importance can render. Believe me, all my heart is in it; but alas! how jaded a heart!" "How to rescue it (if Grace will grant the light) from 'limbo'? In itself, it is a fine theme.... There is a struggle between flesh and spirit." From the account of Sufi Theism, interspersed with suggestive indications of its coincidences with Higher Hinduism both doctrinal and devotional, it

makes an appropriate transition to the succeeding exposure of Idolatry as a spurious yet ever-recrudescient phase of Popular Hinduism. There, at once, the mind is refreshed by a fine object-lesson in letting in light without heat, in weighing competing claims in the scales of underlying connotations, in enforcing "more the common feature than the differentiating element" and in uncovering the heart of true conviction while wholly refraining from poking at the spleen of fatuous fanaticism. The argument against the image-worshipper's virtual agnosticism is thus persuasively clinched in the summing-up of the case: "Between us who stand for Spiritual Worship and the brother who sets store by Idolatry, this is the vital difference: according to him, God is too vast, sublime and perfect for man and therefore we must be content with the 'image'; but from our view-point, there can be no worship unless one has got into line with the Spirit of God oneself." The never-tiring plea for Monolatry as a necessary—in fact, as the only intelligible—corollary to Monotheism will be found developed with sweet reasonableness at fuller length along a variety of lines in eight of the *Sangat* meditations of the Third Section, namely, Nos. IX-XVI. All these related pieces, therefore, require to be studied and assimilated together as a connected and complete course. Likewise, along with the little bit on "Our Primary Faculties" in that other Section (the only fragment preserved out of a preliminary address of some length), the four items beginning with "God and the Principle of Causality" and ending with "God and the Problem of Evil" form a group by

themselves, being a series of simple talks to young men in preparation for a Liberal Theology Examination on the basis of R.A. Armstrong's well-known handbook entitled "God and the Soul." Of these, the first three dilate upon the familiar evidences of Theistic belief in the light of the intuitive experience of causal demand, ethical discernment and aesthetic delight. The fourth embodies a clarifying contribution to the theodicy of Divine Providence in face of disquieting conditions. If "A created universe complete and perfect like its uncreated Author Himself is an inherent impossibility;" if "the point is not why the river has banks but what purpose the banks serve;" if "it is an inherent necessity in the being of a God who is good that the end and destiny of human life should be a moral end and destiny;" if "to win and achieve morality is to acquire it against all adverse possibility;" if "the world must end in goodness with the same inevitable necessity with which a master-champion in a chess-play will win the game and checkmate the opponent, though the opponent is all the while given the fullest choice;" if "pain so-called is only the process by which the best in a man is distilled out;" then, there is certainly enough of reinforcement here for the firm faith of Emerson: 'What I have seen of God leads me to trust Him for what I have not seen.' A really weighty pronouncement upon the most perplexing of problems, this remarkable Discourse, coupled with Meditation No. XX on "Inequalities in Creation," is one which must amply repay close perusal and calm reflection and help to induce the all-important mood of practical, spiritual attunement:

"Even as the shallow brook goes on making a gurgling noise while the deep stream is serenely silent, so, as I commune more and more with Him and imbibe more and more of His goodness, my voice of protest becomes hushed into the silence of satisfied joy." Next, how pleasantly reminiscential and passionately hortatory is the "Birth-Day Retrospect" which closes the First Section with a clear indication of the predominant place occupied in the whole life-work by the best interests of the Cocanada College, the Harijan Community, the Female Sex and the Social Purity Movement! Now that the life itself has closed upon its earthly scene, the "farewell request" therein urged as such will come home with added force as one that ought to be engraved in letters of gold upon the reverent hearts of all genuinely devoted friends and admirers—"Therefore, my renewed appeal to you is this: if you attach any significance to, and think there has been even an iota of worth in, my life which needs being conserved and developed in other lives, set your face against the deluge of impurity in all its forms and shapes."

In the next two Sections, as ever, the worshipful reader is inspiringly led on into the sanctuary of adoring glorification and grateful homage in the exalted company of one of the rarest mystics of devotion. For such, assuredly, represents the correct, comprehensive characterisation of the Master—that is, if 'mysticism' is properly definable as religion in its most concentrated form thoroughly dissociated from all abnormalities of consciousness and if mystical experience consists *par*

excellence in the soul's spontaneity of intimate communings with the Infinite-Immanent. Seldom, it will be perceived, has the Altar of Grace in these modern times been waited upon by a more fervently faithful servitor than this, our devotee of devotees possessed in an uncommon degree of the true gift of, the real genius for prayer and wrapped ever in the spirit and language of devotion. Whatever the occasion for the time being, profound is the depth of emotion overflowing, happy is the appropriateness of sentiment forthcoming, lofty is the flight of aspiration soaring up, ever-fresh is the realisation of interrelatedness among the Divine attributes, and nectar-sweet is the sense of sanctified unity with the whole confraternity of co-worshippers. And all this is voiced forth—with what singular opulence of variegated expression! “In the world's talk of the body, I am a stranger. In God's language of the spirit, I am of the family”—such is the bond of self-filiation applicable in relation not to this or that cherished family alone. Verily, whether uttered or unuttered, it marks the constant key-note of all ceremonial sacraments conducted in the midst of every ring of fellow-worshippers. One clearly traces here the lineaments Keshub describes of the man who has made the love of God the ruling passion of his life: ‘He feels an unbounded domestic interest in the welfare of others.’ As for the pervading tone of an oppressive unrest of exile born of the constraining passion for God, here, too, is a fresh exemplification of Keshub's dictum after Madame Guyon: ‘When faith in Divine mercy becomes deeper and sweeter in the course of development, that

mercy itself appears to the believer to be the severest punishment for his sins.' The 'Meditations' making up the bulk of these pages stand out invested with a peculiar interest in that they comprise the few revelations of remarkable range and insight preserved out of quite a number of unpremeditated thinkings-aloud in response to the stimulus of earnest inquiry at congenial *Sangat* gatherings. Amongst them, the Worship Group (already referred to anticipatively) purveys, as in a golden goblet, the very cream of vital truth--that of Worship being no mere 'outmoded' superfluity of subjective superstition, ever so refined, but the supreme, inalienable urgency and potency of life; the most wooing occupation of mind, heart and soul in which values are perforce transvaluated by an ever-free inflowing of light from on high to impart a new direction and dynamic to all life's concerns, even as it is only in so far as you turn your sails to the wind that you can hope for onward progress in your voyagings. And while helping with effective conviction to resolve many a haunting doubt and difficulty along the path, the breadth of standpoint assumed refreshingly relates the fancied innovation of congregational service to the hoary "Bhagavata idea" of "gopi, first, and Krishna next; again, gopi and Krishna; and so on." "God is in the middle, pouring forth His rapturous love into all the worshippers, men and women. They in the entire ring rejoice in Him and also in one another for His sake." And now, reviewing all the other portions of the two Sections together, no attempt to pick up some of the precious seeds of life-giving truth so plentifully

broadcasted over the field can help missing out far more than it may succeed in taking in, whatever the selective principle and however discriminating the process. None the less, here is a rough, tentative *resumé* calculated to prove of help so far as it goes : the inherent necessity for the All-inclusive to be also the Ever-creative under the intrinsic generative impulsion of Love "free, expansive and reproductive" by nature and, again, for "the reflecting object" to endure "as long as the reflected original subsists" ; the sublimating vision of Matter as no other than "the manifestation of Thy sustained and enduring power and but the definition of Thy homogeneous and eternal purpose," while Memory signifies the marvel of an integrating "correlation of the revelations made by Thee" ; the clamant challenge of the message not merely of the Unconditioned God but also of the self-expression of that God in nature and, still more, in humanity", "apparently conditioned in the finite but really unconditioned in the infinite" ; "the basic, axiomatic truth of man's direct access to God" with unrestricted freedom of spirit yet with "unity and continuity of purpose" in "all-comprehensive, all-harmonising progress" "like the healthy bird that takes larger and larger circles" ; the innate capacity of each individual man for, and, hence, his paramount right as well as responsibility of, functioning, star-like, as at once a receiver and a transmitter of the light of Heaven ; the perpetual embracement of the whole round of relationships with a strenuous endeavour after the life divine on the part of "faithful trust and trustful faith" in identification of the ' Pilgrim's

Progress ' with the ' Holy War ' of the light of conscience against every species of compromise for love and out of the bracing consciousness of " God incoming, sustaining and fulfilling and man supplicating, self-consecrating and God-glorifying " in the cultivation of serenity of temper, sweetness of disposition and steadfastness of purpose as alike the objective and the evidence of the dedicated life of devout discipline; the vivid perception of " the subtlest unity between the human and the Divine in the loftiest and the profoundest of aspects " leaving " nothing for which man may take independent credit, as there is nothing for which God does take overt credit "; the imperative duty of the pursuit of education as verily a process of " increasing contact between the All-wise Divine Instructor and the ever-reverent human learner "; the eternal ordainment of inviolable wedlock as the sovereign key to mutually perfecting self-fulfilment in the sexes "; the spiritual interpretation of each birth-day as " the returning witness unto the ceaseless continuity, the limitless flow of Thy life and love, goodness and grace, " the advancing years being " not milestones along the path but storey upon storey in the temple Thou buildest up with Thine own hand "; and, finally, the transcendental conception of salvation as " the consummated process of self-realisation " in " the complete experience " of a oneness with God which retains undissolved the capacity to commune and to enjoy the communion even amidst the self-infusion of the universal into the individual as against the self-annihilation of the individual in the universal. In fine, solid as solid can be and sublime to an equal de-

gree is every fraction of this whole teaching upon the chart of life, the assimilation of which must needs mean as immense a profit as its possession is indeed a happy privilege to be henceforth cherished the more as a hallowed heritage from the irrecoverable past.

The entry into the shrine of hero-worship in the last Section sets the mind hovering sadly again about those golden lips, now sealed for all time, which, through a long succession of decades, were never once known to remain unmoved into the renewed rapture of reverential homage at the recurring ascension-anniversaries of the first two stalwart patriarchs of the Brahma Samaj. The architect of reconstructive vision and virility for a decadent nation and the *avatar* of recovered illumination and communion of spirit in a materialistic age always made an unfailing appeal to what of the prophet-seer and the seer-saint dwelt in the Master's own inmost constitution with amplitude of range, on the one side, and profundity of realisation, on the other. The Father of Modern India and his worthy spiritual successors are, of course, each his own monument to the nation. Yet, as to the man and the message in either case, his grateful countrymen cannot be enriched with too many interpretative studies by those most eminently qualified. The particular aspects that receive rightful emphasis in the three glowing tributes herein contained are : the typically synthetic catholicity of the Rajarshi's modernist outlook inspired by the luminous vision of an all-embracing, all-harmonising Universal Spirit of Truth in the unity-amid-diversity of human nature

and human progress; and the representative character of the distinctive stages in the Maharshi's beatific attainment of all-entrancing, all-transfiguring mystic experience in the fruitful realisation of a Universal Spirit of Life as the Life of life and the Soul of the soul, the Life of the soul and the Soul of life.

So glistens the beckoning bounty of the golden harvest of today — but, ah, with none of the promise of the customarily looked-for Harvest Festival of the Birth-day !

Just a word, at this point, falls due about the sources of the raw material of reports wrought into shape in some of the contents thus far sought to be introduced. In the case of the Liberal Theology Class-Talks (Section 3, No. V ; and Section 1, Nos. III — VI), the supply was made years ago by Mr. M. Ramamurti (now deceased), and in that of the *Sangat*-Talks (Section 3, Nos. VI—XXI), only recently by Mr. P. Sattirazu (of Pithapuram). Those valuable good offices were received with as warm acknowledgments *as they were rendered with ready kindness.

Maharnavami, }
21st October, 1989 }

V. RAMAKRISHNA RAO

CORRECTIONS*

* Page	Line	For	Read
vii	9	vide	wide
3	24	itaken	taken
7	2	Empyream	Empyrean
15,16		Laili	Laila
		Maznu	Majnun
16	12,19	one	One
17	9	courses	comes
18	29	say	say, the <i>naksh</i>
		mirror, the <i>naksh</i>	mirror
20	17	'Bana Adam	'Banee Adam'
21	13	spirit	Spirit
24	28	that	the
32	13	in	on
	25	ouched	touched
61	2	seetch	sketch
68	17	on	in view
70	19	'sathyamasthi'	'Dharmam chara'
89	1	we	me
90	9	had	have had
98	18	round	around
108	13	to	for
140	4	<i>Brahmandanadhaye</i>	<i>Brahmandanadhaya</i>
127	5	say?'	say?', even as
175	3	art	wouldst remain
258	29	forth	foot
279	12	Bengali	Bengal
283	6	every	every one

* Obvious typographical errors in spelling and punctuation being here left out.

ADDRESSES

AND

ARTICLES

Om !

I

THE PERFECT MAN OF SUFIISM *

(1929)

O Thou Great God, the Lord of all the worlds, merciful and compassionate! Thou the Sovereign Supreme of all judgment! We worship Thee; we supplicate Thy protection. Do Thou guide us on the right path—the path of those to whom Thou art gracious, those with whom Thou art not displeased, those who stray not away from truth. Blessed be Thy name!

Friends and Fellow-seekers of God,

Believing it to be in the fitness of things, I have now worded my prayer according to the opening verse of the Koran—the *Suratul Alhumd*, as it is called. I wish we had some Mahammadan brother here with us to recite that sacred verse in the original Arabic. I am able to repeat it; but I am utterly wanting in the right intonation with the correct pause. But there is in the opening lines of Saadi's 'Book of Wise Counsels', as it is called in Persian, what, to my understanding, embodies a beautiful paraphrase of the same sacred verse. If you please permit me to do so, I shall recite that and give you a free English rendering of it:

* Discourse at Brahmopasana Mandir, Cöcanada, during the Brahmotsav Celebrations (26-1-29),

*' Kareema ba bakshayey berhaleyma
 Keh havtham aseerey kamandey hava
 Nadarem gairaz tho faryad rus
 Thuye asseyara gathabaksh vo bus
 Nigahadar mara zerahey qatha
 Khathadar guzaro savabam numa. '*

' O Thou Merciful One, have compassion on my plight. I am a prisoner caught in the trap of the senses. Beside Thee I have none to whom I can carry my petition; for Thou alone art unto all sinners the Forgiver and the Protector. Pass over, eliminate, the sin that I have thus far committed; and reveal unto me the sacred path of righteousness'. Well, that may serve as our opening prayer.

It is a matter for sincere gratification and thankfulness that, here in connection with these celebrations, it has been possible to obtain for ourselves the results of the study, reflection and experience of diverse exponents to expound and inculcate the ideals of the one eternal Truth as voiced and heard by the representatives of various faiths. When drafting the programme for these celebrations, my brethren here at once sprang upon me the subject of Sufism. You know the well-known or notorious proverb: 'In an arid desert the castor-oil plant makes a mighty tree'. Because I am able to talk a few words of Persian and spell a few in Urdu, I am taken in some quarters to be an adept in Sufism and quite at home in that profound ocean of a subject. As a certain person

remarked on an occasion of a similar kind, it is ~~easy~~ to propose but not so easy to expound. It is ~~easy~~ enough to reel off the phrase, 'The solar system!' But whoever can undertake to treat of it with any the least approach to adequacy? I am in a like predicament. I confess to you in the name of God's barest truth that my knowledge of the present subject is so rudimentary that, but for the desire to commend it as of vital importance even through a feeble attempt to expound it, I should not have ventured to speak upon the theme at all. So you will kindly remember the confession I have made that my acquaintance with it is, even with the utmost charity, to be characterised as but very rudimentary.

To begin with, I may refer to a certain characteristic of the average mind as regards Religion. There was a little boy born of Andhra parents and for several years brought up in a little town in Northern India on the banks of the Ganges. He learnt more of Hindustani than of Telugu, his own mother-tongue. After a while, the parents shifted to Narsapur in West Godavari. As the boy was being brought away, he cast a longing, lingering look at the Ganges and thought that he was leaving it behind forever. Once he was itaken to the river-side—that of a branch of the Godavari—in Narsapur. And he exclaimed, '*Arey, idhar bhi Ganga hai!*' (Hallo, Ganga is here also!). Our mental frame in matters of faith is akin to the conception of this boy. Just as he thought he had left the Ganges behind and was surprised to find it there also whither

he had gone, so, if only we open out our minds to God's inspiring impulses, we are often surprised to find that what we believe to be the special characteristics of our faith are, after all, though garbed in a different form yet in their essence, found also in other faiths. Again, it may be stated—I hope I do not mistake it—that the conception of Islam in the average non-Islamic mind is that it is a flat, dogmatic creed in which there may be plenty of room for ritual and observance but that it bears very meagre vestiges of thought and ideal. Yet the actual truth of it is that in Islam, as in every other great Dispensation of God, there are among its myriad votaries the masses whose religion is dogma, the classes whose belief is philosophy and the *elite* whose faith is vision; and that the little, comparatively small, though not necessarily negligible section among the Moslems known as Sufis—that very honoured and honourable section—consists of persons with whom Truth is a reality. They have not merely inferred Truth logically but, so to speak, sensed it by intuition. Therefore, it behoves all our non-Moslem friends to take note of that fact and try to get into vital affinity with the mine of uplifting ideas, inspiring ideals and sanctifying suggestions contained in Sufi belief. For instance, as we all know, our Moslem brethren make it the first, fundamental article of their faith to declare that there is only one God or, as they put it, '*La ilaha illallahu*' (There is no God but God). And for the ordinary Moslem, this conception means that God is a unique being the like of whom is inconceivable. But according to the Sufi, not only is God a unique being

like to none else but God is the only real Being and all the grand portraiture which we rejoice to behold as the universe is, after all, a phenomenal expression, a temporal manifestation, unto which we cannot, by the very forbiddingness of truth, assign real being. And again, in this conception of the One God, unique and matchless, the ordinary Moslem might find only that supremacy which rules out all rivalry. But unto the Sufi the one Supreme God is, on the outer side—if sides might be talked of in this context—One without a second, leaving no place, even in the vastness of the profoundest conception, for a second ; while, on the inner side, He is *Vahadahulashereek* (One without a partner or sharer). So that, this One Supreme Reality is exclusive of a second and inclusive of all. And according to the very fundamentals of the Sufi faith or, rather, of Sufi experience, the whole process of creation is only a continued, practically eternal process of the One manifesting Itself as the many and, again, the multifarious being resumed into the One. As a Sufi philosopher has said, all that we know and feel and think of, what we might call the whole, complete sum-total of human conception regarding the world, may be put into one aphorism: the procession of the Essence from itself to itself ; the royal progress — so to speak, though in all too hackneyed a way — of Essence from itself into itself. At once you realise how that is only a most cheering replica of what, according to the Hindu Scriptures, is the sublimest truth : ‘All this that is has come into being out of That and, having come into being, lives

and grows in That and completes the circle of being by entering into 'That. Recognise That as Brahma'. Professor Radhakrishnan, in one of his works, thus sums up in Hegelian phraseology the theory of the Upanishads as regards the progress of creation : it is the Self coming out of Itself to return to Itself to be eternally Itself. The Sufi tells us the same thing. Time forbids my going into the details of the Sufi conception of the world-manifestation. In the first place, there is the Sufi formula or aphorism : Creation is not *from* God but it is *of* God — not something produced as the handiwork of God but the self-manifestation, the self-expression, of God. And the Sufi says : Herein lies the great mercy of God that He who was absolute and unconditioned willed to make us see and sense and enjoy and grow rapturous over His love and put upon Himself the limitations of manifestation in terms of time and space. The Sufi's statement of the origin or the motive-power of creation is so surpassingly similar to what the sublime thinkers of other dispensations have stated. Says the Sufi : the one essential characteristic, not attribute, of God is Love, and Love declines to be solitary ; and hence the Supreme One said to Himself, 'I am a hidden treasure. Let me make myself manifest that it might be shared and enjoyed.' At the same time, the Sufi takes care to add that creation does not exhaust the Supreme Reality. In the Koran, it is said the Blessed Prophet (upon whom lie the benediction of God !) asked : 'What was the Deity like before creation ?' And He said, 'We were like luminous mist'. A writer on the

subject observes that that is like Dante's spaceless Empyrean. We have in the Hindu Scriptures a fine exposition of it. Maheswara, the Supreme One, the Primal One, figures Himself as a column of fire. Siva springs up and soars and soars aloft to touch the top of the column but, coming back, owns, 'I cannot reach it'. Vishnu plunges deeper and deeper but comes back and confesses that he cannot sound the bottom either. That is the Absolute One whose apex none can mount, whose abysmal depths none can plumb. And the Sufi's conception is very similar. But as there came the Divine thought or, as one might say, the Divine idea because the universe is, after all, only an idea rendered manifest, then, from being *Zath*, 'Original nature', He became the First Conscious Unity. Then He, as it were, came into the limits of time and space and could, however dimly, be conceived and perceived in consciousness. There is, next, what is called 'He-ness, passing on from the Conscious Unity to the external world. So that, we have in effect a wonderful multiplicity yet negated by the unity that pervades all. Further on, there is the 'I-ness' in the individual assumed into the Eternal by the Eternal reporting Itself as the Truth of the individual. And finally, there is the difference in identity, unity in plurality, the One manifested resuming the many manifesting, '*Vahadiya*'. That is, so to speak, the circuit of creation. Out of the measureless potentialities of the limitless Essence which no one can ever comprehend there is brought into being, through the self-expression of unity, the manifold of creation culminating in the advent of

humanity to be resumed again into regenerated divinity. I shall not dwell longer upon this. What little has been stated has been necessary in order that we may understand what the Sufi means by 'the Perfect Man'.

'The Perfect Man', according to the Sufi, is the *nuksh*, the copy—not merely the reflection—of the Divine Essence; the archetype, the ideal type, of creation. For, says the Sufi, man is made in the image of God; and the world is made in the image of man; and the Perfect Man is he who so embraces the whole creation in his liberated and sanctified being that, on the one hand, he says between him and God there is no conscious difference, while, on the other hand, he is so positioned to the whole universe that there is nothing to him alien and foreign. He rises from ordinary human self-consciousness to a breadth and a vastness of conception to which is given the name of cosmic consciousness wherein can be gathered and comprised—not in detail but by intuitive insight into the essence of things—the whole body of creation. Therefore, unto him Law does not mean man-made convention but a mode of creation pervading the whole universe, and Morality is not a self-imposed rule of conduct which man can accept or reject as it pleases him but a fundamental principle of the government of the universe to which no exception can be imagined anywhere and at any time. Thus, he is the total assemblage of the vitality of the universe. At the same time, it should never be forgotten that, when he speaks of himself as identical

with God, he means identity with that aspect of God which has expressed and manifested itself in creation, and not that profundity which lies beyond human conception. Says Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, he alone is a true *yogi* who has realised, not merely theorised upon, these three aspects of the Deity: the Surpassing One manifest in creation, the Intimate One abiding in the spirit, and the Transcendent One who is beyond these and abides in Himself. You remember that verse in *Sreemadandhrabhagavatam* where our inspired poet speaks of the One Supreme as transcending, as abiding beyond, all the worlds. There comes a mysterious dark; and, beyond that, there He shines in His own effulgence. That is only a picturesque way of putting it. The central point is that creation does not exhaust God. And, therefore, the Sufi declines, on the one side, to be a follower of the immanence theory which says God is absolutely comprised in, and exhausted by, creation. On the other, he similarly declines to follow the transcendence theory which says that God is beyond all this. But he is a believer in that sublime Unity which is manifest through creation yet subsists in its unfathomable immensity beyond creation. This must be fully realised. The Perfect Man is the one who, without becoming completely identical with the Essence, as they call it, has become the *nuksh*, the copy, the reproduction of that much of the Essence which has come out into the universe as the creative, multiplicative and resumptive unity.

Leaving it there, let us ask ourselves what are the steps in the progress of the pilgrimage of this man of perfection. That is of vital interest to us. To begin with, there is this great postulate of the Sufi, namely, that the progress of every soul along the path of truth and righteousness is something that is directly and personally in the keeping and under the guidance of God. He is not a far-off Power that creates and enunciates laws and stands apart to judge. No. As says the author of one of the finest works on Sufism, the Lord of life is ever close by with the benign assurance : ' Oh thou seeker, I am with thee at every place—the Light of thy eye, the Delight of thy heart.' Therefore, adds the Sufi, this process of conversion, of redemption, of sanctification, is started by the *kashish* of God — the great, universal Magnet drawing each soul unto itself. Call it 'grace'; call it by any name you please : but there *is* the *drawing* on the part of God. And then, observes the Sufi, this *kashish* which, is irresistible, this attraction which simply cannot be withstood, this stimulates *koshish*, that is, an attempt and endeavour on the part of the seeker himself. Amplified and exalted further and further, it at last culminates in *beenish*, in vision. So that, in this attainment of beatitude, it is *kashish* * that initiates, *koshish* that supplements and *beenish* that consummates. The *kashish* comes at some time or other to every one ; and blessed is he that feels and responds to it in *koshish* ! The first proof or *nuksh* that *ka-hish* has proved effectual in *koshish* is repentance—that biting, burning remorse which kindles a hell in the

human heart, not merely abhorring, but also turning away from, the past worldliness; the feeling within that creates an unquenchable flame which is said to be sometimes so fierce that the person actually collapses. This repentance and this turning away from the world not in disgust but out of the higher impulse that not in the surface superficiality that we call the world is the true abode of God—this is the true concern of the soul. When there is this consuming as by an unquenchable fire, the penitent goes forth to tell the world of his own misery: 'I am here consumed by a fire I cannot quench'. But the Sufi unfolds also the secret of how God Himself prearranges for the relief of the penitent soul. That is the providential plan of drawing him to an elect person or persons who can understand the trouble and afford the succour. There comes the *guru*, the priest, the *shaik*, the *pir*, who does not step in to keep God out but helps as the agent of God to take his miserable brother by the hand and lead him on. And he prescribes to him all sorts of tests. 'Are you really penitent?' 'Yes'. 'Then, will you never commit those sins again?' 'Never'. 'What else?' 'I would go into the fire of penitence seventy times over again'. The truth and sincerity of this repentance is tested in various ways by placing the man under divers trials. To the high-placed magnate, the *pir* said, "You have been the Governor of such and such a city. Now, you wish to change. Go with a bowl in hand and beg at every door; say, 'For pity's sake, forgive me what I did as Governor and give me alms'." And there are various other examples, equally telling, of this ordeal

which the penitent is called upon to pass through in what is called renunciation. Apart from this kind of self-humiliation, there is also a regular process of mortification, *nufskushi* (as it is called). The appetitive being must be broken. As they put it in a beautiful figure, until this wall is broken and chinks and rents are made, the lustre, the *nur*, of God cannot enter in. The opening must be made; and therefore, the disciple is subjected to the second discipline of self-mortification. It is said of one that he would go and shut himself up in a little cell, take a bundle of sticks and say, 'I will meditate, and if I fail, I will beat myself with these sticks'. The whole bundle was broken; yet he was not satisfied. When the sticks failed, he would dash his head against the wall. One other mortification they prescribe is fasting. You find in the lives of all great men a period of fast before feast—not that fast which comes of privation but the temporary paralysing of all other demands than the call to God. In the story of the blessed Prophet, we read how he would go to an adjoining mountain and there fast to prepare himself, living upon dates and water. After this kind of subjugation of the senses, the dictator asks, 'Now, have you trust in God?' That is the next point: trust in God. Be sure of three things. Firstly, believe that there is only one God and none else to enter into your imagination as the adored and adorable. It is not merely not bending the knee or bowing the head to another but absolute freedom from spiritual unchastity. There is One and only One, none else. Secondly, trust Him completely

for all your needs and wants, not merely taking no thought of the morrow but cleaving to the absolute confidence that, already, your needs and wants are all in His hands, even as He is the Perfect One in the hollow of whose hand is the daily bread of the whole world. And thirdly, rejoice in God and none but God. Thus, own none but God. depend upon none but God; rejoice in none but God. Then naturally follows what they call *zikr*, meditation and contemplation. And herein is traceable a wonderful parallelism between these methods and the methods elsewhere. There is the initial spiritual training : dwell upon some name and repeat it till the very letter and sound disappear and only the import and impulse of it lives with thee. The perfection of this process is reached when, not merely in working moments but even when the man is in sleep, his very breath comes to take that sound. We have in the Brahma Samaj one great instance of this experience of *namasadhan* — the practice of *Om* till it became infused into the very breath so much so that you could hear it even through the sleeping moments. This is the preliminary process, the purgative process (as the Western mystics call it), which prepares for the next higher step. After it comes the illumination process. This illumination, again, is a prolonged process even like the preceding purgative process. They say there are four stages in that illumination which clearly impresses itself not merely upon the thought but upon the whole spiritual being. The first illumination is the Illumination of Action. All the action going on in this world — mine,

thine, his, every body's *karma* — is of God. It is His spirit that energises as the Author of it all. We are only the expressions of it. These acts are not mine. I have only been chosen as the manifestation of these acts. Next, there is the Illumination of Names. This process of naming you will observe also in other systems of practical philosophy. A name has generally a very distracting and disintegrating effect upon human thought and conception. But as the illumination comes, names are disclosed to be not mere names, sound without significance; but each name has to be pondered and interpreted so as to indicate the one relation existing between the Creator and His creation. The *sahasranamams* of God—'the Nameless One of a hundred names', as the poet has beautifully said—are all the compendious, summarising exposition of one relationship between the Creator and the creature. And thus, says the Sufi, the pilgrim has to withdraw from all these names, these distracting and diversifying suggestions, and so re-read and re-interpret them that they become vital links between himself and the Lord. The third illumination is the Illumination of Attributes. As, in names, we analyse and analyse to get at almost countless aspects of the object named, we now enter on the first stage of the reverse, synthetic process wherein these manifold expressions are to be resumed into a few definite attributes the like of which we cannot apply to any one else. There are three attributes which constitute the ultimate residuum. There is *Jalal*, the glorious, the majestic, the mighty. But greater, higher, than that is *Jamal*, the beautiful.

And as fulfilling this, there is *Kamal*, the perfect. It is in these attributes that God is to be realised. And then, says the Sufi, not merely name and form but the essence and substance of the Deity enters into the spirit of man. You cannot arrive at a correct conception of majesty, of beauty or of perfection and stop short there without participating in the essence of Being. And then, the final illumination is the Illumination of Essence when you see that there is none but Himself. There was a traveller, says Jalaluddin Rumi. He came to a place. He knocked at the door. 'Who are you?', some one said. 'It is me, So and So.' 'In this homestead there is no room for you and me'. The door was not opened. The wanderer goes back and wanders for another year and comes and knocks again. The old one asks, 'Who are you?' The answer this time is, 'It is thou'. And the door opens. As another great Sufi has it, 'In this city there is room only for one'; and unity alone is life and peace. Such is the Illumination of Essence. Some of you know that beautiful, instructive story of *Laili and Maznu*, in which the Sufi allegorically represents the process of human expansion and emancipation. Laili is the beloved maid; and Maznu is the lover gone mad. The names are very significant—the 'dark night' and the 'mad lover'. The lover is mad to the world, and the charm of the beloved is night to all but the lover. The king of the place hears of Maznu, the brilliant scholar, having become infatuated with the charms of Laili, and says, 'In my harem there is many a maiden far fairer than this damsel! Why has Maznu gone mad for her?' And her answer

comes, 'You do not see me with the eyes of Maznu'. Then Maznu is separated from Laili. He goes in search of her and, out of sheer exhaustion, leans on the trunk of a tree and remains there motionless till it looks as though he is a part of the trunk itself. Laili passes by and suspects it is a human body. She strikes against this seemingly human body; and there is a growl. Laili asks, 'Who art thou?' He says, 'I am Laili'. 'How canst thou be Laili? If thou art Laili, I am none!' Therefore, says the Sufi poet who gives us the story: As you become none, you will see the one. This is the Illumination of Essence through the complete elimination of the self. As you fly towards God in spiritual flight, see at every stage that you shake off the blinding veil of dust, the selfish self. You hold up your hand before your eye; and your tiny hand conceals the whole sky. When there comes the Illumination of Essence which says, 'There is one, only one', you have the complete divesting of the veil of self. Instances there have been where great Sufis reached that apex or that depth, and the *fana* was complete. The Indian *Rishi* said, '*Aham Brahmasmi*'! The Sufi, however, demurs, 'Is not this a circumscribed view of God? The individual has been so thoroughly illuminated, so completely obliterated, that the One speaking in that one voice is the Truth'. In my humble opinion, the real interpretation of our own sublime aphorism is not that this little finite self can arrogate to itself the supreme status of the Infinite but that through a process of draining out the self the residue is the spirit that speaks. It is—'I am God,'

It is not—'God is I'. Well, when it comes to that complete *fana*, it is followed by *baqa*, that is, ecstatic union. Says the author of a remarkable book on Sufism—and they have their own peculiar phraseology: the 'wine', the 'tavern', the 'cup-bearer' and so on—"That beloved one gave me a cup of wine and said, 'With this, wash away from the tablet of thy life all characters of self'." In other words, as this divine illumination, this spiritual transfiguration, courses, the self is gone. But it is not that nothing is left behind. There is still the *baqa*, the continued union with God. And then, the experience of the transfigured soul is: "I do not hear with these ears, He hears; I do not see with these eyes, He sees"; and so on and so forth. The psychology of this experience is beautifully set forth in one of the Upanishads by means of a series of brilliant aphorisms beginning with 'He is not seen of the eye, but He is that by which the eye sees'. According to this sublime psychology, the eye is not a sense-organ functioning as the gateway of impressions and perceptions for the brain but a point, a focus where the spirit is functioning for the realisation of the universe as the indwelt manifestation of God. When once, with this distinction, this life of union has been entered on and is continued, the *baqa*, as it is said, becomes the *kutb*, the pole, the axis, of the whole creation, not as usurping the place of God but as forming the centre of power for all around. And perfection being thus reached, there comes the third stage in the lives of the great Sufis—what is called the journey in and with God. First, there was the

downward course leading to destruction. Then, there was the upward ascent leading to union. And now there comes the journey in God and with God. So that, as I have said, the perfect man is not only the *naksh* or copy but the antetype of creation. Then he has to render back to creation what he has received from the Essence, from God. As Miss Underhill has said in the case of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, the end of the spiritual pilgrimage is not merely union with God but unitive life with God. So, thereafter, the regenerated, sanctified one enters again into a thousand relationships of traffic and commerce with the world, no longer as self bargaining with self but as donating itself to all around. Thus alone can he make good the great gift of life which he has received in grace. Therefore, the perfect man is he who, in the language of Plotinus, forms rings around the Central One and, instead of moving by himself, makes his circuit along those rings with his eye fixed upon that Central One. In some of the sublime utterances of the Bhakti School, we have presentations symbolic of this. Till the devotee comes down to *fana*, it is darkness. As he goes through *baqa*, it is light, rapture, ecstasy. But in the journey in and with God, it is all 'music and dance'. That is to say, the ordinary activities of life become sources of joy not only to him who engages in them but to all who participate in them, as is the case with music and dance. The perfect man is the copy, as they say—not merely the mirror, the *naksh*—of God : he does not merely reflect as a mirror does but becomes, so to speak, a sub-agent of God in His

creative activities. Such is the perfect man according to the Sufi conception. There is, of course, a good deal to say ; but time forbids. I have only put in my feeble language the barest picture of the perfect man.

I shall now refer directly to a few utterances of the Sufis ; and with this I shall close. One utterance of a Sufi is this : ' I am He whom I love ; and He whom I love is I. We are twin spirits dwelling in one frame. If thou seest me, thou seest Him. If thou seest Him, thou seest us both'. Here, it is not that the original must include the copy. And then again, another Sufi has said, ' I start with gazing ; and gazing and gazing, I change into being'. This gazing upon God is not merely the subjective process of the mind but really the reciprocative affinity between God and the creature. Thus I grow into being by gazing ; and as I grow into being, I am caught up in that love which says, 'In this city there is room enough for one only'. Again, there is a great poem by Jalaluddin Rumi which conveys in a story what is meant by the perfect man becoming the pole, the axis. " I slipped down as the inanimate ; I rose as the plant. I died as the plant ; I rose as the animal. I perished as the animal ; I rose as man. Why should I be afraid of death that thus at every stage exalts me into a higher order ? I know, as I die as a man, I shall rise as an angel. The testimony of the whole process of creation is that out of the united voice of all phenomenal beings there comes the refrain, ' We return to Him'. " Another Sufi, when he has come to the third stage of journeying in God and with God, says : ' To the world's ear of

flesh, there is a multiplicity of sounds from birds, animals and material objects, making quite a babel; but unto my ear, it is all one universal chime into which all these sounds fit in as a song of praise and glory. I tell you, sisters and brothers, in those solemn moments when, through God's grace, we are abstracted from what might be called our superficial and fleeting experiences and prepossessions, say, at dawn or sunset, the consciousness does come even upon us amidst the sounds of birds and animals, of women and children, that they only hymn together the universal praise of Him who blesses the day's toil and the night's repose. It does sometimes come upon even humble individuals like myself—this impressive, transporting experience of one who has been journeying in and with his God'.

And what is the Sufi's idea of Humanity? He says: '*Bana Adam* (the children of Adam) are *azo*, limbs and organs of one another; for, in their origin, they are of one essence. Prof. Deussen says: The Christian teaching says, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself', but cannot give any reason for it; it is the Hindu Vedanta that supplies it, *viz.*, that thy brother is thyself'. The Sufi philosophy also furnishes it. What, next, is the conception of Charity? If the man of God (*Murd-e-Khuda*) owns a single loaf, he will set aside one half for the deserving dervish before consuming the other half. Thus it is that even in the scantiest supplies of life the man in need has a brother's share. And one poet says the man of God will not put a strain upon the heart even

of his enemy. He proceeds: 'How will you ever come to that position when you never tire of quarrelling with your own friends?' Lastly, the man of God is he who is so filled and possessed with the vivid realisation of the Indwelling and All-sufficing God that he will read the name of God and realise the presence of God wherever he goes. And he insists that each person shall follow his own God-prescribed course, because God has not laid down one rigid course for all. Said the camel-driver, 'Oh my God, my Shaik, where art Thou? If I could see Thee, I would give my milk to Thee'. Moses observed in disdain: 'Kaffir, get away'. Overnight, the spirit of God appeared to Moses and said, 'Moses, Moses, that comes not out of his want of faith but wholly out of his want of that right perception in which you take pride. I have given him that which he can receive. Why do you look down upon him as unworthy?' Therefore, says the Sufi, such is the all-adaptability of the Deity that He applies and manifests Himself in as many ways as there are souls. And such is the catholicity of the Sufi himself. Here is no exclusive faith. As the author of *Qulfa-e-nasary* would have it, the all-inclusive faith says: 'See God, see the One, say the One, know the One and live in the One.' That is the ideal of the Perfect Man according to the Sufi.

And now, as we part, having gathered here together to see the Truth, worship the Truth, rejoice in the Truth and bless the Truth, may the God of Truth, by His infinite grace and mercy, so vouchsafe it

to us all! This *Mandir* is designed to serve that heavenly purpose — even that of so drawing spirits together in fraternal mutuality that, while they are here, they may all feel with one heart within, with one sky above, with one earth below and with one atmosphere around, that they are one with God and with one another in God. Blessed be His name!

Om ! Santhih ! Santhih ! Santhih !

II SPIRITUAL WORSHIP

Versus
IDOLATRY*
(1931)

OPENING PRAYER

Thou the Supreme, Perfect One ; Thou the Transcendent and yet Immanent One ; Thou the All-surpassing and yet All-permeating One ; Thou the Outsoaring and yet the Indwelling One ! Thou art our God, alike in the remotest and loftiest reaches of thought and in the nearest and most intimate experiences and engagements of the heart. Thou art awe-inspiring ; and yet Thou art love-generating ; intensely, profoundly deep and yet intimately, affectionately familiar. Unto Thee we bow down in reverence of soul ; and unto Thee we render the praise and homage of our hearts. O Thou Blessed One ! Thou dost become dear unto us even as the very core and centre of our whole being. On Thee the universe is based. In Thee the soul is nestled. Along Thee proceeds the progress of human strength. Thou art the thrice-dear God, sublime, sacred, sanctifying. Unto Thee we render our devoutest thanks on this solemn and happy occasion. Do Thou vouchsafe unto us the bliss of the vivid realisation and

*Presidential speeches in a public controversy after the
Brahmotsav Celebrations at Coacanada (21-2-31)

the quickening experience of Thy presence with and in us that, thus inspired and guided, we may render unto Thee the witness and testimony of our hearts' grateful, our souls' reverent, experiences of Thy deeds of grace and miracles of regeneration in and around us. Blessed One ! We feel we are precious unto Thee even as Thou art the all-holy One pledged to perfect Thy whole creation in righteousness. We render ourselves unto Thy care and commend our endeavours to Thee for Thy blessing. Hallowed be Thy name and Thou be praised of all and everywhere ! *Om Thathsath !*

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Friends and Fellow-worshippers of God,

As you are aware, we are assembled here this evening to listen to the last of a series of four addresses, organised by the members of the local Brahmo Samaj, on the supremely important and sanctifyingly impressive subject of Worship. I would humbly and earnestly plead with you to take note of this fact at the very start that, though seemingly we are in the midst of a controversy, really and essentially we are here to realise, each one of us, the value and worth of Worship. The notice convening these meetings was, no doubt, headed with an apparently antithetical title. Yet, on this occasion, if your attention has not been already drawn to it, I would request you to note more the common factor than the differentiating element. We are all at one as to that profoundly religious experience of Worship; and the qualifying word in

either case is only a term of convenience to indicate the particular occasion that has brought us here to contemplate the great theme of Worship.

Now, a word or two of a personal nature may generously be permitted. Years ago, thirty-five or forty years ago, I used to brace up and feel the utmost thrill of zeal with reference to the subject of Idolatry. In fact, if I may make a personal confession, it was a kind of rule with me not to speak on any religious subject without dwelling on the deleterious effects of Idolatry. After a while, that ardour gradually abated; and the heart and soul felt special attraction for the other and higher aspect—Spiritual Worship—so much so that, prompt and full in those days as regards arguments for combating Idolatry and almost empty now on that score, I feel my real interest, my true spiritual weal, lies in humbly striving and endeavouring to realise in myself, by God's grace, all the strength and joy of the worship of God in spirit and truth, in love and service. Nevertheless, I have noted that of recent years there has been an inclination on the part of the public, to a larger degree than to my knowledge seemed to exist three decades ago, to stress this subject of Idolatry and uphold its place in individual and national progress. I do not know whether I shall be commending myself to your approval, if I venture the observation that this resuscitated zeal on behalf of Idolatry appears to me, to be frank and candid, an element in the programme of national reconstruction with the bulk of our countrymen. It seems to be the

understanding in many a mind that what is of such ancient standing ought to be conserved and kept on as an element of the national life. Whether I am right in my reading of it or not, this, at least, is plain that in more recent years there has been in evidence a stronger desire to vindicate the system of Image-worship than, according to my understanding, was the case three decades ago. At that time, there was a larger volume of opinion that, while not coming into complete line with the Brahma and Arya Samajes, yet felt that the nation's position as an advancing and self-evolving agency ought to move forward beyond the universal acceptance of Idolatry as a method of Divine Worship. I could remember many an instance where those who were not off their moorings in regard to Hindu society in general thought it a matter for serious consideration whether Image-worship should any longer be given unqualified reception as a national religious institution. But there has latterly come to be, to whatever cause it may be due, a reaction to a considerable degree; and the advocacy of Image-worship has reached the point of absolute, unmitigated assertion even as regards not only the very minute but apparently very unpalatable aspects of the question. There was a time not long ago when it used to be a staple argument in favour of Image-worship that it was helpful for, and could be allowed unto, those whose intellectual development was not of a measurable degree. But times have changed; and I have noticed the procedure of going the whole length of it and declaring with a challenge that unto no one is any

kind of worship possible except Image-worship : all other modes are only make-believes. That is an absolute position different from the attitude of the advocates of Idolatry some three decades ago. So that, with reference to the various forms and expressions of Image-worship, the present attitude, as I said, is one of unconditional acceptance. What was at one time referred away as allegory is now asserted as literal fact. Take, for instance, that address delivered the other day by the venerable Kappagantula Ramasastry garu by which, with reference to many of the sublime sentiments expressed, I did feel so instructed and elevated on more than one point. What was the impression it made upon us when we heard, in the course of it, that the well-known escapade of Sree Krishna with the *gopis* must be literally understood? I do not wish to say a word of disrespect. We have braced ourselves up to the position of defending accounts of that kind !

I would humbly appeal to you to pause and reflect on the present situation—how far it is substantially correct. Now, we have it affirmed that Worship, if it is to be true and genuine, must be Image-worship and that not alone for the lower category of intellect, all else being but make-believe—closing the eyes and seeing darkness. And this root-and-branch advocacy covers extremes at which the previous generation paused and said they could only be treated as allegorical. Unto those here and those not here who are interested in the welfare of our country, my humble prayer

is that they should pause and reflect whether this requires recasting. I do not purpose to dwell upon the usual arguments urged by those whose attitude towards Image-worship is not one of hearty acceptance. But if, as stated by the latter-day accredited exponents of the theory of Image-worship, Worship, to be at all significant and genuine, must be the worship of images, if this is a proposition which we must stand by, then, as a corollary to it, there arises the other consideration that Spiritual Worship is an impossibility for any one—a mere word without connotation; God as Spirit is philosophical jargon; and God as transcendent and indwelling, not to be perceived with the senses but to be apprehended by the mind and the heart, is only a conventional language which we may not condemn but which in honest candour we cannot but pass over as conveying no significance. Are we prepared to accept that corollary? Be it once granted, on the other hand, that Spiritual Worship—worship in truth of mind, love of heart, devotion of soul—is a fact and a reality, a joy and a blessing. Then, at once we come on to think of the proposition whether or not that system of Worship ought to be, if not as an achieved realisation, at least as an earnestly pursued ideal, obligatory on every one sincere and soul-athirst. If it be once granted that Spiritual Worship is a reality, an inexhaustible fountain of strength and peace and joy, then, time counts for nothing, endeavour becomes an obligation, and even a life-long attempt at its realisation becomes the supreme, paramount duty of every one who desires to be other than

a mere conventional follower of any religion. Shall we or shall we not ask ourselves this question and exert ourselves in the direction of the great truth that upon every one it is obligatory to constrain all his powers to this one object of life, namely, to worship God in spirit and in truth? Then we reach a fairly tenable position. For, it is a difference only in the degree of experience and enjoyment arrived at as regards the stage where we are and with reference to the pace of our advance towards the great ideal itself. All distraction, all tardiness, all slackening of effort becomes a wrong done to the spirit in each one of us. I, therefore, request you, apart from this day's lecture, to ponder these few ideas I have endeavoured to place before you. Ask that question, simple in appearance but far-reachingly profound in application to life and deep beyond the depth of human sounding: Is it or is it not placed on us as the first duty to strive and pursue without slackness or doubt this great object of attaining to the spiritual worship of God in truth and love and righteousness? If that is accepted as the position on which we are agreed, then, we have only to consult, to interchange views and to cooperate as helpmates and co-seekers in that one great quest, namely, how to come to the blessed state of worshipping God in spirit and in truth. If that is accepted, we can agree to think out and resolve our differences regarding details. I shall not detain you any further with these rather abstruse remarks but request the lecturer of the evening to proceed with his address.

CLOSING REMARKS

Sisters and Brothers,

The one prominent idea in my mind is this. We are all here absorbed in our interest in this subject of Worship. Leave alone all the accessories and concomitants ; our main theme is Worship. According to my conviction, which is also the conviction of almost every other member of the Brahma Samaj, Worship is the supreme privilege of man—not an obligation imposed, not a duty enjoined, not a return for some favour granted or to be granted. It is the prime object of man's life to worship God—not, as might be fancied, to please God but to live God. The end of Worship is to reproduce God in man, to make man not merely a miniature but a correct presentation of God. Therefore, the essential requisite of Worship is a correct idea of God. Here is a pregnant truth which cannot receive too much attention at our hands, a truth of the profoundest psychological insight. Would you understand an object. you could do it only by becoming that object. Nothing can become a true object of knowledge and enter into the range of personal experience, unless one is interwoven with it in spirit. According to Carlyle's humorous illustration, the fox knows where the goose lies concealed ; for there is a common element, not of identity, but of affinity between the one and the other. He who would know an object must become the spirit of that object. If you would know this stick, it is not that you should become it in length

and other physical features; but you should realise to and in yourself what constitutes the inner life and energy, the pervading element and the conditioning characteristic of the central organism of the stick. Similarly, if you would understand me, you should become myself, enter into that which constitutes my spirit—not my length, not my limbs, but the radiating process of my whole life. So with every other object. Consequently, you can worship God, only as you understand God and not otherwise. To worship one whom you do not understand is to address an unseen something that lies behind the veil. It is alone a consanguinity and affinity of nature—not, of course, an identity of constitution—that makes me understand my God. Between us who stand for Spiritual Worship and the brother who sets store by Idolatry, this is the vital difference: according to him, God is too vast, sublime and perfect for man and therefore we must be content with the ‘image’; but from our view-point, there can be no worship unless one has got into line with the spirit of God oneself. I can worship God—and worship is the feeling of a sense of awe, admiration and reverence mingled with self-surrender—only when I understand the sublimity of that God. Prior to it, it is but putting the cart before the horse to call it an act of worship. Such is the right principle to which, as we humbly believe, our own conception of Worship is related. Once again, Worship is the deification of the human spirit even through the humanisation of the Divine Spirit. Between the two there subsists an eternal contact. Never entertain the

misgiving that God is not in touch with us. His spirit, in very truth, is pulsating through every one of His children.

Worship being thus a spontaneous urge from within, the reaction of the soul to God's moving spirit, the first implication here is that Worship is possible because God and man are in touch, in mutual communion through a similarity of nature; because, in other words—driving away from the mind all notions of physical contact—there is the element of divinity in man infused into him from his very birth. Not the conjuring up of an imaginary being, Worship is the flowing in of the Divine and the human spirit together through the response of human aspiration to Divine inspiration. The pre-requisite is a real knowledge of God; not a complete or exhaustive but a right understanding of the actual nature of God, who is the object of worship. That, let me repeat, is the first axiom of Spiritual Worship: man and God are akin in spirit, and there is constant contact between them. Even through Worship, this grows closer, deeper every minute. To get, then, into this contact, apply the spiritual element in you, and do not say He cannot be seen and we must resort to objects that can be touched. That would be cutting, not untying, the knot—really, the giving up of God, the ever-available God. The Divine Heart is in perennial throb; and what is Worship but the human throb in unison with the Divine throb?

The second implication is that the finite, evolving and entering into, and intermingling with, the Infinite, must necessarily take unbounded time in its appointed course. All the same and none the less, there is even now the stimulus to endeavour. The goal, of course, is ever-eluding ; and perfection is to be attained only through the fulfilment of the time-process. But there is no occasion, no condition, where it is permitted to say it is not available. In fact, it is strictly a question not of man's endeavour but of God's grace, not of man's ascent but of God's descent.

Therefore, Worship requiring as the condition precedent a true knowledge of God as reflected in, and reported to, the human spirit, and this process being something that must go on through endless generations, the conclusion is that our all must be dedicated to it — mind, heart, soul and strength. Worship is not simply the occupation of one organ but the growth of the whole spirit into God. According to the conception of the Brahma Samaj, it is not the unknown God made known through symbols but the known God increasingly known to the pilgrim of eternity through the grace of that God. We are told Worship is not possible without concentration. But concentration on what ? You must concentrate on that which you wish to worship—the Reality that is half veiled and half whispered by the shadowy phenomena of the world. The world is not an obstacle, not a substitute either. God is purveying Himself by impressing His lineaments upon both Nature and Man. It presupposes that we know God, that Worship is the contact between the human

and the Divine and that in this process the Divine Spirit is as much operative as the human. It is the plain truth that there can be no love, say, between two benches or between two trees but only between two persons; and worship is nothing but the profoundest love between two persons. To disown knowledge of the Divine Person and yet practise worship is to set a sum in equations, leaving out one side ! It is a mere apology for Worship, unless there is inherent and intimate contact. All concentration must be upon those attributes and manifestations of God which indicate His nature.

Now, when we say that God is to be worshipped and that He can be worshipped spiritually, how stands it with Image-worship? Who that has a heart can call Image-worship a sin? There are, indeed, associations about it which are positively degrading. But these apart, if you ask me whether it is a sin to plough the sea-sand, I only say it is love's labour lost ! If you ask further, 'What am I to do?', I say, 'Step over and come to alluvial soil; and you will find the harvest'. What we humbly submit is : Give unto the human spirit the nutriment it wants; then alone it thrives. Worship is the purveying of that spiritual nutriment which alone can promote the growth of the spirit. Man is the imbibing agency; and God is the imparting Source. The recognition of this relation that I am imbibing because God is imparting cannot be an unconscious process in the very nature of the thing. And what is the result ? It is that the son grows into the essential spirit of the Father—not to be superseded by, not to be lost in, but to live in, the Father. We live in the atmosphere;

but we do not merge in it. And Worship is life in the atmosphere of the Spirit. Concentration, as an essential discipline, must be of that which is consistent with the nature of the Being upon whom we wish to concentrate — the concentration not of the eye or any other sensuous organ but of the conscious will, carrying God wherever we go, even as God companions us wherever we are.

It is asked, 'If God is everywhere, why not worship Him in this image?' The simple answer is—'even because God is everywhere', He cannot be focussed into any particular object. If somebody said my spirit as Principal was present in the whole College, could he be understood to mean that every door-post there was myself? It is not that any object is rendered unavailable as a suggestion; but the *nethi* or the negative process of elimination has got to be brought to bear upon every object here below, that so I may outgrow my limitations and enlarge my horizon. Hence, '*nedam yadidanupasathe*'. The noblest and most sublime conception of the relation between God and man is that of the spiritual marriage of the human with the Divine—*madhuryam*, where God is the Spouse Divine of the human soul. Accordingly, we consider worship rendered in any other form or to any other object as spiritual unchastity—not a sin to be condemned by others but an act of infidelity which I must revolt against in myself. Not through theory but from the little personal experience God has vouchsafed unto us are we prompted to speak this truth. Exercise, therefore, the charity to think that through His personal

grace we are able humbly to enjoy the bliss of worshipping Him in spirit. Not out of that temper of iconoclasm which only too lightly sweeps away others' objects of worship do we sing,

‘ The dearest idol I have known,
 Whate’er that idol be,
 Help me to tear it from Thy throne
 And worship only Thee.’

That shall be the happiest fulfilment of the object of all creation. As creation began in *anandam*, so shall creation be consummated in *anandam*—delight in the Deity. That is the worship to which we are pledged to devote all our days, that so God may be magnified into the fulness of cosmic vastness and unto the beatification of every soul created by Him. May we, as we are, really and consciously feel Him leading us homeward and heavenward with His own Divine hand ! Blessed, blessed be His name now and for ever !

GOD AND THE PRINCIPLE OF CAUSALITY

(1915)

Thou the supreme Sovereign of all truth ! Thou the sole Inspirer of all wisdom ! Thou the unfading Light on the path of every humble soul going out in quest of its true destiny ! We commend ourselves to Thy care and guidance humbly, trustfully and prayerfully, as we enter on this little task. Thine alone is the power and the wisdom and the goodness to guide. We seek Thy truth ; we honour it because it is Thy truth ; and we follow it because it is Thy light. Our sins are heavy. Our shortcomings are oppressive. Weak is our sight, and tremulous our hearts. Yet, however sinful, we are Thy children. As taught by the sages, as felt even by ourselves, humble mortals, we know and we experience Thy love. We cling to Thee as our Father. Thou art the *Paramapitha*, the Supreme Father, of each one of us. Thou hast taught us again and again, as our loving Father, to long for a humble, trustful and prayerful quest after Thy truth and Thy righteousness so that we may be drawn closer and feel nearer to Thee. Teach us, guide us, lead us, illumine our minds and inform our souls that we may realise more and more the significance, the value and the joy of our lives. We bless Thee with all our energies through word and deed. Infuse, we beseech Thee, Thy holy spirit into us. Make us fully and directly see and feel

how Thou art our Father, Guide and Friend. Blessed blessed, blessed be Thy name now and for ever !

One of the simple, primary convictions instinctive and irresistible in their urge, outreaching and wide-spread in their operation, within us is that of cause. This irrepressible sense within the make-up of our being demands imperatively that every event must have a cause whether already known or yet unknown. Without a cause, there can be no reasonable course of life—neither physical nor mental spontaneity and no moral import in life. Cause is inevitable alike for material, animal, rational and moral existence. Thought leading up to thought; incidents grouped into conceptions; these, again, sorted into, and suggesting, general laws—all proceed from the exercise of the sense and impulse of causation. Be it an insignificant act like the winking of an eye, or be it a tremendous occurrence like the eruption of a volcano, or be it any righteous or unrighteous deed great or small in the moral sphere, nothing ever transpires uncaused and by itself. My yesterday's acts have a significance and a responsibility for to-day. And I reap as I sow. This leads to the inference that the vast, the complex course of phenomena to which we give the name of the universe must have an adequate cause of its own, that is, a cause commensurate enough with the result.

Now, what exactly does 'cause' stand for? Some philosophers have tried to explain away cause as one thing which always precedes another. But cause is that

from which, and not merely that *after* which, the effect follows. A cause not merely precedes but produces its effect. Cause and effect, together, imply a movement, an expansion and an unfolding. And these are happenings properly traceable only to the exercise of a will somewhere. In fact, our very conception of cause derives originally from our consciousness of the working of 'will' as we know it in ourselves. The most direct experience we have of cause is the inflowing of our own will into our own acts on the different planes of life's activities physical, mental and moral. The basic idea of cause, then, is the putting forth of a will—not merely a power that exerts itself but a purpose that prompts the power. A cause, in short, is a designing power. Hence, we conclude, as we must, that all cause proceeds from will. And to the universal Will-force in question we give the name of God—*Sath*, as the Indian philosophers call it.

What, then, of 'laws'? Laws are merely the expressions, the enunciations, the definitions, the statements, the formulas, of certain uniform or settled processes, ways and methods. They do not take the place of causes. They tell only the *how* and not the *why*. If laws were to be accepted as causes, then, the astronomer in Johnson's *Rasselas* would be quite right when, having long observed and recorded the laws of nature, he exclaimed with a sigh, 'I have possessed for five years the regulation of the weather and the distribution of the seasons. The sun has listened to my dictation, and passed from tropic to tropic by my

direction; the clouds at my call have poured their waters, and the Nile has overflowed at my command..... But the life of man is short: the infirmities of age increase upon me, and the time will soon come when the regulator of the year must mingle with the dust.'

As some thinkers have sought to explain away cause as that which always precedes, so some scientists have attempted to explain it away in terms of energy. When, nearly two centuries back, there arose a great controversy between scientists, on one side, and theologians, on the other, the dispute turned ultimately upon these two points—namely, what is matter, and what is energy? Matter is the expression of a certain kind of movement, as energy is the expression of a certain kind of will. Formerly, matter was considered to be the receptacle of force. But now it is proved that it is the expression of force. Matter is the unification, the concretisation, of certain forces. The scientist's idea, therefore, of energy as well as of matter and of matter as well as of energy, originates really in will. We have, accordingly, to postulate as a necessity of thought that this whole universe, as an effect bearing everywhere the impress of unity amid diversity of form and function under the reign of law, is from an eternal, all-pervading Energy which, because it is the expression of a Will, is at its start a great desire and at its end a comprehensive aim. It is the life-utterance, the self-manifestation, the self-expression, the self-revelation of what is designated as Divine Volitional Energy always in operation and everywhere at play.

It is the embodiment of the Will of God and no separate entity or independent existence with aught in it of self-caused and self-contained capacity.

As to the specific relation between God as the Primal Cause and the universe as the perennial effect, there is one school of thinkers, the Deists, who believe that the universe is, as some would humorously characterise it, like a football or, as Paley would have it, like the mechanism of a watch. Their conception of God is that of an absentee God, as Carlyle would christen Him—a God who stands at a distance and, only for readjustment, restoration and restarting, now and then comes in, incarnates, somehow introduces, Himself into this world. That is a very queer supposition. As John Stuart Mill himself admits, if it requires a God once to create the universe, it also requires a God no less at every moment to sustain it. The helplessness with which it starts is the helplessness in which it continues. As such, the Deistic argument fails to recognise that any example it may adduce can be but partially correct. All matter, all movement, all life, all mind, must be from God and of God. Hence the old saying in the Bible, 'In Him we live, and move, and have our being.' As the *Kenopanishad* has it, 'It is He who is the ear of the ear, the understanding of the understanding, the speech of the speech. He is the life of life, the eye of the eye'. God, then, is nothing if not the immanent, interwoven, all-permeating, all-energising Life and Support of the world. He is not like the mainspring alone of a watch. He is like the vital sap that runs

through the whole plant from the minutest tendrils up to the grossest tissues. The Deistic conception errs by borrowing an analogy from the life-principle and the corporeal frame of man as viewed in clean-cut separation from each other and by holding that the mind issues a programme and leaves it as a time-table for the body to operate by itself. On the contrary, the Theistic belief herein outlined is the belief in the concentrated attention of God upon every patch and particle of the sum-total of things. This is the essential difference, between the mechanical inorganic and the immanent organic system. God is omnipresent and, therefore, He is also omniscient. He is omniscient and, hence, He is also omnipotent. And He is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent even because He is Life, the Life of life. As Tennyson sings, with Him there is no *was* and no *will be*. He is eternal. He is the everlasting *Now* and *Here*. That is what our people mean when they speak of *Viraipurusha* and *Viswaroopasandarsana*. The Divine Will-force, let us repeat, is not a distant Deity but an indwelling Power exercising a direct influence and imparting an immediate impetus. Thus, every molecule, every motion, every monad, is an expression of God's power, and every act a manifestation of His will. And what has been called His universal attention is only a particular way of denoting that the Divine power and will is operating equally at every point of time and space. The God of transcendence is also the God of immanence.

Science tells how, in the beginning, there existed a thin, attenuated, rarefied misty matter called nebula,

There followed stages of evolution from the existence of mere agglomeration in the mineral kingdom to the emergence of growth and expansion in the vegetable kingdom, then to that of movement and consciousness in the animal kingdom, and then again to that of thought, reflection and self-consciousness in the human kingdom. Thus, there have been four great hitches as landmarks or epochs in the processes of evolution—to start motion, to generate life, to evolve consciousness and to produce self-consciousness. And these successive Acts, as also the Prologue, of the entire Cosmic Drama, each pointing to the distinct import of a larger measure of causal power in stimulating motion, in educing growth, in infusing life, in quickening consciousness and in inspiring self-consciousness—the last with its capacity, however limited, even for the contemplation of the universal and infinite Absolute—these do necessitate and compel a belief in the presence, the supervision and the intervention of the great Being of self-conscious, self-determining, self-expressing volition throughout. Here is a Will-power that is both thought and energy, not merely impelling but guiding, not merely unfolding but developing, the systems of the world. So the *Taittiri-yopanishad* describes it as ‘that from which these creatures are born; by which, being born, they live; and into which, returning, they enter.’ The *Isopanishad* declares, ‘All this is enfolded in, indwelt by God—even the minutest of things in the vast universe’. The *Kathopanishad* adds, ‘Subtler than the subtlest and mightier than the mightiest’; and the *Kenopanishad*,

'That which the understanding cannot conceive but by which the understanding is conceived.' Thus, all in all, God becomes the informing essence and the innermost core as well as the impelling source of life, the vital centre as well as the all-comprehending circumference of the universe.

Lastly, a word or two about the main points of divergence between the Theistic and the Pantheistic outlook. Pantheism says that God and the world are conterminous and coeval; they extend to the same extent and continue through the same period. But, over and above this, Theism insists that God stretches infinitely beyond the farthest range of space; He survives limitlessly beyond the remotest run of time; He towers transcendently above the loftiest majesty of the cosmos; and He descends fathomlessly below the inmost depths of the universe. As Dr. Martineau puts it, what is all this creation but a handful of spray dancing on the crest of the wave while there rests, underneath, that profound ocean of being the depths of which no plumb-line can ever reach? That was what the Hindu philosophers meant when they made a distinction between the unexpressed, unmanifested God or *Brahman* and the God that has come out into the world in self-revelation or *Isvara*. What can language do? What can thought do? What can even imagination do? These all come back baffled and baulked in the face of that infinity. Thought and imagination simply lose themselves in trackless wastes. And words, of course, are a sheer impertinence. The Divine possibilities are

never exhausted. The resources of the Deity never run out. It is this overwhelming circumstance that challenges our deepest trust commingled with awe: '*Bhayanam bhayam, bheeshanam bheeshananam ; gathih-praninam*'. What is there that we cannot find in Him? The sun is the centre of our system of orbs. From the sun have emerged these many planets. And from these planets have emerged such countless satellites. This one system extending through ranges of space which man feels too giddy to contemplate is, after all, a tiny speck, a little raft, voyaging along through the immensities of space. Yet this sun of ours is itself but one of numberless suns. And all this vastness which spans the universe of worlds upon worlds is, to use a common but significant expression, held in the hollow of the hand of the Supreme God of infinity. Likewise, almost beginningless as the course of hoary time may be according to the testimony of science, the billows of the ages only tumble down into the shoreless ocean of God's eternity. Thus, imbedded in every atom yet unexhausted by immensity, concentrated in every moment yet unrestricted by antiquity, He is the Perfect, the Absolute, the All-transcendent Being whom no worlds can limit and bound and whom no aeons can compass and comprehend. The God of immanence is also the God of transcendence. When such is the case, what is my position and your position? Whence our intellectual thought and whither our moral sensibility and wherefore our affectional susceptibility? This issue raises another important point of difference between the

two systems under consideration. Pantheism regards even the individual self as no more and no other than a shadow of the Divine, the so-called thought, feeling and will in man being simply a pale and passing copy — nay, a fleeting bubble, a fictitious semblance. Theism, on the contrary, views man as an accredited agent, though, of course, a dependent entity. Out of His own *anandam*, God has sundered, sacrificed and differentiated certain aspects or some particular parts of Himself into individualised personalities without detriment to His own infinite wholeness and endowed them with intelligence, entrusted them with responsibility and blessed them with the joy of an irresolvable and not supposititious selfhood. As the little islet is upheaved and encompassed by the ocean and yet remains marked out as a distinct region; as the limited oasis blooms out of the heart of the dreary desert and still remains circumscribed into a separate spot; as the minute-looking orbs are held up in the firmament and shine withal as so many single abodes of light; and as the floating iceberg is surrounded and supported by the waters out of which it is formed and over which it sweeps along, even so, in the vastness of the being of God, we do constitute irreducible spots and centres of thought, feeling and volition — all in God, through God and for God Himself, now and for evermore. To Him we owe our genesis and our continuance, His own self being reproduced in us. And so, our relation to Him is like that of the son and daughter to the parent, the disciple to the preceptor, the follower to the guide, and the subject to the sovereign

In fine, He is the uncaused Cause of nature and of humanity right through and for evermore, it being understood that even growth is slow creation.

IV
GOD AND THE LAW OF RIGHT
(1915)

Thou great God ! Thou supreme Deity ! As the True, Thou art our Guidance. As the Good, Thou art our Protection. As the Beautiful, Thou art our Joy. As the Holy, Thou art our Inspiration. As the Eternal, Thou art our Stay. As the Ever-living, Thou art our Life. We thank Thee ; we glorify Thee ; we praise Thee. We come to Thee, humbly seeking to be taught, informed, led, guided, strengthened, sanctified, inspired, saved by Thee. Thou most loving, holy and perfect Father, take us, teach us, check us, guide us, perfect us, as Thy children. Our little efforts are so full of imperfection, so burdened with ignorance and sin, hardness and, above all, faithlessness. These endeavours of ours—what can they do, unless Thou bless and direct them, unless Thou be their inspiration ? Do Thou be with us and guide us that we may be fitted to receive with joy the thrill of Thy intimate presence in us and our immediate nearness to, and personal touch and communion with, Thyself. We commend ourselves to Thy care. Do Thou guide and teach us. Blessed, blessed, blessed be Thy name now and for ever !

Akin to the conviction of an inevitable cause, there is in us the consciousness of a great moral law, a mysterious sense of the imperative authority of the

ought and the inviolable prohibition of the *ought not* which tells us that reverence is good and conceit is bad, that compassion is noble and vindictiveness is ignoble, that truthfulness is commendable and untruthfulness is reprehensible. This mysterious sense, which enunciates the law that the right is natural and obligatory and the wrong unnatural and eschewable, reveals itself unto us as the sense not only of propriety but also of obligation.

Take the life of any martyr — one who, against the world's combined power of persecution, faces death itself for the sake of what he or she believes to be an imperative duty. Take any of those great personalities who have been the models, the shaping exemplars, the guiding spirits of the world. Be it a prophet that stands by the truth ; be it a reformer that upholds the law of freedom ; be it a scientist that disowns not the scientific principle he has discovered ; be it a patriot that barter not away the interests of his country ; be it a slave-owner that enfranchises all his slaves because he dare not trade upon his fellow-men's liberty ; be it a contractor of wines and liquors that surrenders the profits of years for the principle of temperance ; be it a humble subordinate that, rather than bribe his superiors, plunges himself into poverty and misery — all these base themselves alike on the moral law. ' Truth ' said Jesus. ' Freedom ', said Luther. ' Dharma ', said Buddha. ' Hari ', said Chaitanya. ' The one God ', said Mahammad. ' The Brahmo Covenant ', said Maharshi Devendranath. ' The widow's tears ', said Iswara

Chandra Vidyasagar. 'The slave's groans,' said Abraham Lincoln. 'But all said, 'The moral law must be obeyed'. And with one consenting voice, they added, 'Obey it with cheer, and it will lead you on as a light. Disobey it, and it will whip and goad you.' There are those who surrender all their interests for the sake of a certain, compelling moral ideal. Tolstoy becomes a mere peasant, wearing coarse dress and eating simple fare and leaving his palace and wealth to the wife and children that will not follow him. He thus becomes a notable example of practical aliveness to the moral law within.

As to the distinctive features of this moral law, right and wrong, in the first place, stand, as Carlyle observes, wide apart at opposite poles. By no means of filtering and draining, as Dr. Martineau points out, can you turn brackish into sweet water. In the second place, while all else are means, the dictates of conscience approve themselves ever as ends and never as means at all. In the third place, the very primal constitution of human nature being moral, the appearance of man on the stage of the world has been signalised by the moral law. The whole history of mankind is the history of the mother's love and the father's righteousness. The love of the mother and the righteousness of the father have impressed it upon every page of the story of human progress that evolution is all a process of righteous love and loving righteousness. The moral principle alone is thus seen to prevail. And yet, in the fourth place, the sense of

the moral law being an intuition similar to other innate perceptions, it may not be, any more than those others, of the same advanced type of expression in all individuals or communities during all periods of the world's history. It evolves itself like all other faculties—subject, however, to the rule that certain dormant intuitions do take a long process of personal and social development before they come to be known as experiences.

Now, obedience to the moral law is, of course, gratifying to the sense of honour and grateful and congenial to the sense of what is decent. At the same time, as already suggested, it is something of a pledge, a holy offering of fidelity, loyalty, chastity and devotion. In short, man's judgment in this regard, to begin with, is shaped and moulded after God's judgment. Man's moral law is a copy, a reflection, a delegated reproduction, of the judgment of God. Hence its universal application. And hence, too, its unescapable obligation. For, that is what is due from man to Him whose will is the ordained law for man, whose ways are the prescribed pilgrimages for man and whose glorious self-realisation is the final perfection of humanity. It is this responsibility that we owe to Him. Of myself I am not the master. I have to serve a Master. I have to do the Master's will, not because He is a tyrant, not because He is benevolent, not as yielding to iron destiny, not as trustfully surrendering my fate and future into the hands of One who is better and stronger—no, not even as a tribute of thankfulness for what He has

done for me; but because the Master is the Model, the Exemplar, the Fulfilment of all my principles and ideals. I am under such an obligation. The will of the Lord works in me in an irresistible way. There is placed upon my choice a certain yoke — not of slavery and submission but of humble surrender and trustful co-operation. It is a debt which I feel I owe to Him by the very constitution of my nature as well as of His. Love delights in service. Righteousness glories in sacrifice. Consequently, we go and immolate, sacrifice, ourselves upon the altar of God, even because and just because we owe it to Him. ‘I am by myself nothing’, said Dayananda. ‘Then, why do I do this?’ ‘Because it is the Lord’s will’. Lord, let Thy will be done, not because Thou knowest best—that, of course, is admitted — but because the *summum bonum* of life consists in the doing of Thy will.

You ask, ‘What about Bradlaugh and other Atheists?’ We might as well say, ‘If every tree must strike its roots deep, what are we to think or make of the creeper that hardly reaches down below the earth’s surface?’ What the roots of the main tree bring up is lived upon by these creepers. Similarly, those good persons who are, beyond question, exemplary souls without being avowedly pious souls as well are such even because they are so many unconscious spiritual parasites in God’s hospitable world. For an electric shock to pass along, it is enough if the two persons at the two ends are in touch with each of the poles. Then, in neighbourly fellowship, the shock travels through the whole ring. Thus, in one word, all those

noble ones of humanity who take not the name of God do yet live on the funded moral and spiritual nourishment of mankind.

Matthew Arnold has said 'Religion is morality touched with emotion'; and he has acknowledged 'a Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness'. Everything has some colour or other. Only, we have not the capacity to see it. That is what the Hindu philosophers have pointed out. There is the moral rule, 'Do unto others as you would be done by'. For this, the Hindu theology gives the reason, 'Those others are, indeed, your own self multiplied'. Hence it is that our allegiance to the moral law makes us, as it is intended to make us, all co-sharers in one substance, brothers of one family, children of one God—

'That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves'.



GOD AND THE SENSE OF BEAUTY

(1915)

Thou the Supreme God, the Essence of all truth, the Spring of all power, the Source of all knowledge, the Inspiration of all goodness, the Treasure-house of all joy, the Fountain-head of all love, the Prototype of all righteousness, and the inmost Soul of all beauty! Thou all-pervading God, we thank Thee that Thou hast brought us together once again that we may, as we believe, sit at Thy feet and receive a ray from Thy countenance, a whisper from Thy voice and a touch from Thy hand. Do Thou put into us the spirit of sincerity, earnestness and humility. Fill us with a genuine desire for the true; quicken in us an ardent pursuit of the good; strengthen us for a devoted adherence to the right; and invigorate us with a fervent passion for the beautiful. We know no teacher like unto Thee. We turn to none but Thee with trust and confidence. Aye, we approach Thee with absolute certainty out of the fulness of faith and fidelity. We bless Thee for the gift of the world's great teachers. And we glorify Thee also for the boon of the world's many scriptures and holy writings. For they all bear common witness and testimony to Thy greatness and goodness, holiness and purity, love and beauty; and they all owe the very substance of their message unto Thee. May we never forget Thee; but may we ever remember Thee in and through those blessings of

Thine, that thus our souls may be led into direct, intimate touch more and more with Thyself ! Do Thou animate us, enlighten us, purify us, strengthen us, bless us and guide us in our humble efforts. Do Thou teach us to trust in Thy lead and follow Thy behest and faithfully endeavour to dwell in the light which Thou dost shed upon us, thus fulfilling the true aim and the real object of life. Blessed be Thy name, beloved God ! Be with us and guide us.

No one is dead to a beautiful scene or an inspiring character. Doubtless, it is only after a very prolonged process of growth in refinement that this intuitive aptitude for what is beautiful and charming shows itself distinctly. The appreciation of the inspiring, the attractive, the purely charming, takes a long time to reveal itself. But, more or less, rudimentary or well-developed, all have a natural perception of the beautiful. Every one is moved by one species or another of beauty. Some may be moved by the charm of exquisite scenery. Others may be impressed with the attractiveness of symmetry or with the harmony of system in the assortment of parts. Still others may be stirred by the spell of noble behaviour. Thus, every one of us has a leaning for the beautiful, whether it be in the form of physical beauty or of intellectual beauty or of moral beauty.

The beautiful, for one thing, is not the useful. There are certain grand objects appreciated as beautiful, although their value in the mercantile world is next to nothing. A well-carved, well-chiselled, well-sketched

object may commend itself as a specimen of art, of man's sense of beauty figured forth in more or less enduring material, in spite of the fact that it is of little practical utility. Nor is the beautiful the good or the righteous. No doubt, we are instinctively led to assign beauty to nobility of character. What is good or righteous does appeal always through certain attractive features of its own. Yet, goodness or righteousness by itself is not what we understand by beauty. The ferocious tiger is not without its comeliness of form and feature. The devastating flash of lightning is, indeed, beautiful to look at. The destructive flood is engaging from the aesthetic point of view. And while the terrible carnage of war is one of the ghastliest of sights, the way in which soldiers drill themselves into models of symmetry in their physical build is a sight of beauty. Thus, usefulness, goodness or righteousness, on the one side, and beauty, on the other, are not synonymous terms.

What, then, is beauty? Beauty is a certain suggestive aspect in a highly finished sight, object or idea which calls forth our admiration, not on account of its usefulness, goodness or integrity, but from its capacity to chase away from us all oppressive feelings of imperfection and all smarting sense of failure or need or want. It is the all-absorbing capacity in a sight or object or idea in the contemplation of whose finish, of whose indescribable but patent and quietly-felt symmetry we are completely lost in self-forgetfulness even to self-elimination. Its approximation to the ideal, its approach to the perfect, in its direction—it is this

property in a finished, almost perfect instance of some well-shaped sight, some well-turned object, some well-constructed truth, some well-built character—it is this capacity of drawing us out of ourselves and making us feel as if merged in its glow, elegance, harmony, charm, that constitutes the essence of beauty. We do not ask whether it is useful or good or morally sound but whether it so enraptures us as to make us, for the time being, forget ourselves. The painter absorbed in the contemplation of the charm of the setting sun—its grey and gold, its glowing crimson, its living blue, its radiant sapphire—and feeling as if, through the avenues of those resplendent depths of space, there opens an ascent into the great beyond, the eternal verity, is, in that situation or experience, a votary of beauty. The mother affectionately dwelling on the features of the child and so engrossed in that contemplation as to forget the demands of other senses and objects is, for the time being, a witness to beauty. There is no question of utility or of morality in such a context. It is only unthinking, unreasoning, self-forgetting enjoyment. The light and shade of a picture finished with all the skill of the artist—this, for the practical purposes of useful life, is of little value. Neither is it of much avail for the purpose of inspiring a moral ideal. But in drawing us away from the ugly and so diverting our desires and tastes as to make it repugnant to us to think of the vulgar, the coarse and the gross—there, it is of immense value. He who has dwelt intently on the unutterable glory of the starry sky and felt as if the whole canopy of heaven has been set with

marvellously-wrought golden spheres and orbs, globes and lustres—such a person cannot be easily led to find himself at home with anything that is mean and sordid. There comes a certain amount of ethereal sublimity into his soul; and he cannot willingly be induced to lend himself to aught that is carnal and of the animal, jarring and grating and repellent. Thus, there is a certain preoccupation of the mind in regard to certain charming sights and objects and ideals which so refine the thought and so sublimate the sentiment that the man cannot be base or low-minded in their presence or even amid the very thought of them. That constitutes the essence of beauty—not what is useful or good or righteous, though, in the highest sense, the beautiful is the useful, the good and the sound. He is lifted above the fleeting and the ephemeral, the giddy and the seductive.

The susceptibility to beauty, therefore, is one of the primary experiences of man. At its highest, the expression of beauty is not anything of the physical. It is something highly intellectual and spiritual—a vision seen, a glory witnessed, a rapture felt, a communion held with a higher and holier spirit. As such, what we call the sense of beauty is not a mere fancy, an illusion of the mind, a temporary cessation of the normal consciousness, such as to make us delude ourselves with some imaginary attraction. It really centres round some extraordinarily enrapturing phenomenon, some sublimely glowing spectacle, some thrillingly charming symphony, some amazingly admirable

symmetry—and is thus an ardent, all-absorbed devotion which we actually feel, come into vital contact with, have personal experience of, and realise in intimate communion. Of its characteristic conditions Wordsworth gives a superb illustration in his monumental work on *The Excursion*, where the Wanderer sees an entrancing sight with a halo cast around the ordinary world and experiences a spiritual impact, a soul-communion, with a transcendental presence. What it is, you cannot express in words—this transporting experience of beauty which seems so completely to monopolise your admiration that you are rendered not merely speechless but also thoughtless. To borrow a well-known comparison from the *Bhakti Sutras* of Narada, the enrapturing experience of the beautiful is like the experience of sweetness by a dumb man. He is able to appreciate it but is unable to describe it. As Dr. Martineau has said, it is like a glorious vision of light which, by its dazzling brilliance, has blinded the eye but illumined the soul. There remains an abiding reflection which completely occupies the mind with its radiant brightness. Eye cannot see it; it is only enjoyed by the soul. This appreciation of beauty is far from a temporary and artificial excitement such as one may feel under the intoxicating stimulus of a narcotic drug. It is not like the dream of an opium-eater, not like the unbridled ravings of a drunkard. But it is as if a peep into supernal glory in between the features of the common face of the world, a glimpse of the golden glow behind the mists of ordinary vision, has been caught by the surprised, reverent gaze of the soul in such wise

that its influence shall not easily pass away. It does not lead to the prostration or exhaustion of the drink-intoxicated man. On the other hand, it nerves and braces up in all subsequent life and continues to invigorate and cheer the person that has seen the vision. Herein lies the vital difference between the spurious, artificial delirium of insanity or inebriation and the true, essential vision of beauty. The one is followed by a lapse and a reaction as in the case of a galvanised outburst of energy. The other is a fresh, refreshing, reinvigorating power which, even when the vision has withdrawn, makes the memory of it a source of abiding strength, wisdom and joy. It is like a guiding star, a cheering companion, a spiritual tonic. It is a balm unto the heart ever after. Accordingly, the vision of some transcendent loveliness is a valid, vital experience of the mind—not something imagined but seen; not jerked out of ourselves but impressed, from outside; not an affection or affectation of our own self but a communion with a greater spirit without us. It is, in fact, an intuition—dim, meagre and feeble in some; strong, full and vigorous in others; but found, in some degree or other, in every thinking and feeling creature.

Traced to its ultimate source, what is this manifestation of beauty but the self-expression, the self-revelation, the self-utterance of the God of beauty. All charm, all attraction, all glow, all radiance, all symmetry, all symphony, all harmony, all sublimity, all loveliness in the world, is no other than the

soul-winning picture, portrait, artistic outcome, of the first seetch of God's own inherent beauty. And so, the human spirit's consciousness of the individual, immediate reaction to loveliness is nothing if not a stimulating and elevating experience of direct participation in the beauty of God with the God of Beauty.

VI

GOD AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

(1915)

Thou great God, our Father and Teacher, our Protector and Preceptor, our Care-taker and Guide, our Exemplar and Saviour ! We render our hearts' devoutest thanks unto Thee for Thy innumerable blessings ; for the countless proofs of Thy loving-kindness, Thy marvellous providence, that counts out, anticipates, provides for, our daily and hourly wants and yet keeps itself behind so that we may, in our own way, seek after what we feel to be good. Thus, granting us protection and yet leaving us free, guiding and yet giving exercise to our faculties, Thy ways are wonderful and Thy methods are marvellous. We come here again that, through Thy grace, we may learn, however slight it may be according to our fitness and capacity, a little of Thy wonderful ways and Thy marvellous methods of giving protection to, and blessing, this world. We feel we are privileged to ask and appeal that we may be taken into Thy confidence and shown, however sparingly, the inwardness of Thy spirit that we may not merely imagine, surmise, guess and conjecture but know, feel, see, perceive and realise that Thou art truly the good God — the God of truth and beauty, righteousness and love ; that this world is not a charnel-house but a Divine shrine ; that the soul in us is not a blind, groping, struggling way-farer but a seeing, perceiving, enjoying, progressing pilgrim ;

and that the whole course of Thy self-utterance and Thy self-revelation is only the eternal life-history of truth and goodness, love and joy. Do Thou mercifully reveal to us somewhat of, grant us an inkling into, the reality of Thy goodness that in us the cardinal faith, the radical conviction, the unshakable trust might be confirmed that we are ever in the keeping of a good, loving, righteous and bliss-giving God. This is our humble prayer. Do Thou guide us. Do Thou reveal Thyself unto us. Blessed be Thy name !

The Problem of Evil is what great thinkers and writers on religious questions have called the great enigma, the standing puzzle, the issue with which every seeker after truth has to wrestle. Philosophers in all ages have raised the broad question how the existence of evil in its two chief aspects of moral evil and physical evil, sin and pain, can be compatible, consistent, with belief in the existence of an all-perfect God. Profound thinkers have been compelled to make serious concessions which, rightly considered, seem to undermine the belief in a God of perfection. Centuries ago, Aristotle said that the marvellous mechanism of the universe surely betokened an all-powerful God but that, at the same time, the trials and tribulations of the world forbade belief in an all-good God. In the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill took the opposite view. The general trend, the predominant inclination, the inherent partiality of the world seems to be, he held, towards goodness but goodness baffled, goodness foiled and frustrated, goodness in intention defeated

in exécution. He argued that, manifestly good and well-meaning but not equal to the mighty task of ordaining all things in a good way, God was not yet — though, possibly, by and by going to be — the all-powerful God. It is significant that, each affirming thus what the other denies, these two great philosophers—Aristotle, the master-dialectician of the ancient, and Mill, one of the acutest master-minds of the modern, world — owe their differences to their respective stand-points and not to any inherent defect in the objects surveyed. The world perceived and scrutinised, the system studied and contemplated upon, is one and the same. Therefore, the suspicion is raised that these mighty thinkers, basing their conclusions on practically the same, identical data, arrive at conclusions which are mutually supplementary, though apparently contradictory. Any way, the problem is one by which all great and good men in the world have been and are confronted: in a world created by an all-perfect God, how can evil possibly enter and exist?

At the very start, it has to be made clear that we cannot quite assume the attitude of Aristotle or of Mill. For, it is a fundamental law or rule of philosophy that a being unconditionally unique in one direction cannot be conditionally limited in another direction. To assign one unconditioned attribute to God necessitates the assignment to Him of all other attributes in an equally unconditioned measure. Between power, wisdom, goodness and righteousness there is no insurmountable barrier of division. They are but the various phases,

the divers aspects, of the same central, intrinsically indivisible capacity—that of perceiving, appreciating and achieving. We may, in fact, venture the proposition that unto none is it ever given to see what there is not latent in him or her, namely, the potentiality to achieve; and none is ever stirred even in potential energy to achieve a thing unless he or she is drawn by and moved towards it. As we perceive a thing, we desire it. And as we desire it, we endeavour after it. That is why Aristotle himself defined man as the embodiment of thought, desire and volition. And therefore, it is not permissible, according to strict reasoning, to posit one unconditioned quality only and seek to cut down all other qualities into limited, restricted dimensions. There is no alternative for us but to choose between a perfect God and no God — a God that satisfies our highest, all-round ideal and a God that does not come up even to our mental and moral stature.

Leaving alone the metaphysical aspect of the question, we have next to consider how to face the Problem of Evil on the practical plane. Evil exists — all admit the fact of it. In pain and anguish, in torture and persecution, in bitterness and hatred, in the violence of passion and the unsparing destructiveness of the volcanic eruption, we do see evil. Sometimes, the evil is so apparent, so unrelieved, so unmingled with any element of good, that we marvel how there could possibly be such unnatural, unrelenting expressions of it. Selfishness that halts at nothing, wickedness that heeds not the demands of humanity, cunning that

stifles outright the voice of conscience—these tremendous, horrible, staggering instances of evil which encounter us on all sides, constitute a standing menace, a repeated danger, to religion. If God is good, why does He permit evil? If God is powerful, why does He tolerate evil? Either God is not good and so He takes pleasure in it. Or God is not powerful and so He is helpless against it. These are the two horns of the dilemma. Our task, then, is to consider how the existence of evil in the world is consistent with the belief in an all-powerful and all-good God.

Now, of physical evil there are different types or specimens. Likewise, of moral evil there are different expressions or instances. But let us ask ourselves which is the greater evil—pain or sin. Given the choice between these two, physical evil and moral evil, which will you choose and which will you reject—a life of pain or a life of sin? Ask your own inner self. The answer seems to be prompt and decisive enough. If you are a man, manly; if your voice of protest against whatever is base and sordid, injurious and tainting to humanity, comes of a superior sense of propriety and fitness, then, you cannot but say that sin is a greater evil than pain, and thus you cannot but prefer pain to sin. As such, if sin is a greater evil than pain, let us ask, next, whether God could have made this world free from sin, whether it should have been possible for the omnipotence of God to make this world free from sin. If God is all-powerful, could He not keep out sin? If God is all-good, could He not

make men also all-good and wholly exempt from moral evil? Take the two qualities of God's all-powerfulness and all-goodness. Are these consistent or inconsistent with the existence of evil? Let us understand, first, what is meant by omnipotence. We ordinarily say omnipotence is power or ability to do anything. But, logically, that is all too inaccurate. God is omnipotent in the sense, not of doing anything, but of doing anything that is possible, that is, anything not inherently impossible, not in itself incompatible. God can do only that which is not inconceivable, not self-contradictory. To take a few homely and familiar instances. Omnipotence cannot at the same time both close and open a window. Omnipotence cannot make night and day simultaneously. Omnipotence cannot draw a triangle any two sides of which are less than the third side. The very idea of such feats is inherently self-contradictory; and the omnipotence of God is not to be put to the test that way. So, as one Parsee scripture says, everything is possible for the Almighty except creating a world perfect like Himself : because to create a world which will be equal to the eternal, uncreated God is an inherent self-contradiction. Therefore, at the very start, there is, in the very idea of creation, the inevitable implication, the constitutional necessity, of imperfection. A created universe complete and perfect like its uncreated Author Himself is an inherent impossibility. The same thing has been emphasised by Rabindranath Tagore in the opening words of the Chapter on the Problem of Evil in his *Sadhana* discourses. To ask why there is evil in this world is, he affirms, the same as

saying, 'Why is there imperfection in the world?' which, again, is the same as saying, 'Why is there reaction at all?' Thus, in the very conception of creation there is the implied necessity for imperfection.

Therefore, the question to ask is not 'Why is there imperfection in the world?' but 'Whither does the world tend? What is the general trend, the predominant tendency, the inherent inclination, of the world?' We have no right to ask, 'Why create an imperfect world?' But we have a right to ask, 'What is the ultimate trend, the final balance, of the world's tendency? Is it in the direction of the good?' The legitimate enquiry is, not whether, from the start, the world has been perfect in all parts, but whether its fulfilment lies in goodness, whether its final goodness has been provided for, previously planned and perpetually kept on. As Rabindranath has put it in the form of an illustrative interrogatory, the point is, not why the river has banks, but what purpose the banks serve. The river may fret and complain that it is limited between the banks. Yet it is a fact that, but for the existence of the banks, the current of the river would not be pushed on. The flow of the tide is thus really compassed and achieved by the existence of the banks themselves. But for them, it would be a stagnant sheet of water only. The banks urge it on to proceed further and further. So, I repeat, the question for us to ask is, 'Whither does the world move on? Does it tend towards deeper gulfs of evil or towards higher altitudes of goodness?' That is the

point ; and according to that criterion, we decide whether the God who has made the world is or is not a God alike of power and goodness.

What really constitutes morality ? Take a very elementary instance. You feel it is sultry. You perspire. And you say it is so oppressive. The wind blows. It brings relief. And you feel refreshed. Yet you never think of saying that the wind has been benevolent, philanthropic and morally good. Your sister is seated by your side. She notices you are showing restlessness. She could be indifferent and could ignore your uneasiness. But she takes the fan and fans you. And you call it a good act. It is the free choice that gives to the act its moral worth. Even as we say it is opportunity that makes the thief, a man who is compulsorily honest is not really honest. One must be honest by free choice alone. There is the scope for dishonesty ; but there is also a constitutional aversion to being dishonest. And that is what signifies true honesty. Therefore, if the end of life is character, and if character means goodness completely built-up, that is, built up until the practice of it becomes perfected into an established habit or second nature, and if practice is continued or repeated conformity to one method and like opposition to another method, the deliberate following of one course to the persistent exclusion of another course, then, it becomes inevitable that two ways should exist in this world—the way of righteousness and the way of unrighteousness. And to ask Almighty God to give to man the benefit of perfection

through the practice of morality without subjecting him to the inevitable incidents, experiences, circumstances and conditions of such conscious choice and such purposeful practice, is to ask for something intrinsically impossible, something inherently self-contradictory. 'Give me the full benefit of wisdom; but do not subject me to the training by which I am to arrive at it'—that is to put forward an absurd proposition. Hence, it is inherent in the very nature of morality, of the building up of character, that there should be the conceivability and also the risk of deflection and deviation from the right—the possibility of going wrong. God's benevolence comes in here—in planting the danger-signal at the parting of the ways and giving the finger-post direction in the shape of conscience. Go that way; and then, in the words of the Upanishadic text, it will be '*mahathee vinashthi*' (tremendous disaster). Go this way; and yours will be the *anandam* of '*sathyamasthi*.' Such is the position in which He places us, opening out two courses before us, commending to us the good and warning us against the evil by the dictates of the inward monitor and by all the accumulated tendencies of the world. And if you would test who is responsible for the moral evil in the world, you must catch the evil-doer, not when he indulges in sin, but at that turning-point where he is feeling the pricks of penitence, gnawed by the excruciating anguish of remorse, and where the worm of conscience is biting into the very vitals of his sensibility. Catch him then; ask him, 'Who is responsible for your sin?' ; and he will

say, 'I and I alone'. Nobody who is passing through that writhing torture, that scorching fire, of penitence ever seeks to throw the burden of responsibility upon God. In this spontaneous testimony of the suffering, repentant sinner, we have the credentials of God. God does not bring evil; God does not tolerate evil; God does not cancel evil. God [merely permits evil with a warning, as the inevitable alternative to goodness, for the growth and development of character.

The question may be asked, 'Why should God trouble Himself about goodness at all? Why not He make this world proof against moral considerations? If it is by these considerations that the liability to sin has been rendered necessary, why not God make this world unmoral?' But is man really willing so to surrender the privileges of humanity? Is he prepared to give up the distinguishing characteristics of himself as man? Is he agreeable to forfeiting all that makes him a man that he might become a brute? A military officer in America once said that he had his gun to get his prey for food and he had, too, a woman whom he had taken to himself to satisfy his carnal appetite; and he asked, 'What more do I want?' 'Is that not a simple, happy life?'—do you say? Well might the ox remark, 'I have the grass to eat; I have the cow to satisfy my sexual appetite. What more do I require?' Are we, then, to descend to that bovine existence and say moral considerations are unnecessary? No. With all our liability to evil through error and deflection, with all our sorrow and anguish, we do place a premium upon, we do

accord an unquestioning preference to, the moral life. Certainly, we would not forego the uniquely distinguishing privilege of man. We must win morality; we must achieve morality. And to win and achieve morality is to acquire it against all adverse possibility. It is a fact that in this world all easily acquired things are slightly valued, while all things acquired after strenuous effort are highly valued. And why? Not for their own intrinsic worth but for the sake of the self-development of the person achieving them. He is thereby made keener in sight, prompter in execution, more resourceful in the ability to meet emergencies. He is, in one word, made richer in every respect. Now, the moral ideal realised in strenuous struggle against temptation is the richest jewel of man's accomplishment. Therefore, God has consulted the right and designed the good in basing the world upon moral foundations, in placing man under the dominion of the moral law, in making character the end of his being, in demanding from his spirit only allegiance to the moral code and setting up before him moral perfection as the only worthy goal. And all this means wrestle and struggle. As Rabindranath has put it, an imperfection which has perfection for its ideal must go through a perpetual process of realisation. That is the end of life; and that is the justification for the existence of moral evil and the liability to sin.

Not only does it not take away from the omnipotence of God that He is unable to create a situation

where there will be moral progress without moral struggle, moral pursuit without the possibility of moral deflection, a growth without an effort for growth ; but it is a demand made upon Him by His own goodness that He must demand goodness as the end of human life. It is not merely that the moral life is greater than the non-moral life, that human life is greater than animal life. But it is an inherent necessity in the being of a God who is good that the end and destiny of human life should be a moral end and destiny. A wise man cannot, by the inherent nature of his wisdom, plan a stupid or unwise course. An artist with the faculty of beauty highly developed in him cannot design a grating, jarring or grotesque thing. So, by the prime constitution of His own nature, God must intend goodness as the objective of creation ; and we do demand it of Him ourselves. When anything has gone wrong, when virtue is kept down and vice is given special facilities, we say, ' Is this the way in which the world is to be governed ? Is this how God should carry on His kingdom of heaven ? ' Such and such, we say, ought to be the trend of life. Consequently, the all-powerful and all-good God must design goodness as the end and aim of creation ; and this goodness can be the result only of sustained effort, which implies the liability to deflection. In both these principles, therefore, namely, firstly, that the good God should make it the prime purpose of His creation that man should be moral and, secondly, that goodness should, in its very nature, be the fruit of growth, the reward of effort, the result of

holy endeavour — in these there is nothing incompatible with the omnipotence of God making for righteousness.

But does God ultimately prevail ? Yes; as Prof. William James affirms, the world must end in goodness with the same inevitable necessity with which a master-champion in a chess-play will win the game and check-mate the opponent, though the opponent is all the while given the fullest choice. So, through all digressions and deflections, the world is being carried forward to the goal of moral perfection. And so, God's goodness and power alike are vindicated inasmuch as evil is bound to be overcome and sin blotted out in the long run. Even a sceptic like Matthew Arnold is constrained to acknowledge that there is at work a Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness. It is too true, as Carlyle declares, that evil by its very nature is unproductive and good, likewise, is productive; or, as Max Muller observes, institutions are longer lived than individuals, because institutions are better controlled by honesty than individuals are. When the moral rule prevails, then continuity is secured; and consequently, length of life is guaranteed by integrity of conduct. Life and morality are intertwined. The influence of moral confederacies is lasting, while that of immoral compacts is shortened. As Rabindranath points out after T. H. Huxley, even rogues and robbers have got to be mutually honest and reliable; for then alone is a gang of wrong-doers possible. They may rob the whole world; but they

cannot rob one another. For united action morality is thus the cementing power. Let immorality prevail; and then the crystallised body of society crumbles into dust. It has to be noted also that it is the moral man that evokes sympathy, challenges confidence and ultimately gains ground. As Emerson has said, of all miracles in the world, the truest miracle is moral courage. Furthermore, the moral man grows stronger and stronger, while the immoral man grows weaker and weaker. Thus into the texture of the world is interwoven the toughest fibre of morality. Therefore, this is essentially a moral world—only, a world in the growing. Just as no organism should be judged as to its full meaning by being arrested at some intermediate stage in its development or by being lopped off into pieces at some particular period thereof but should be judged with reference to the whole process and the complete cycle of its growth, so also the world should be appraised only in the light of its ultimate issue, its full import, its latent purpose, its whole significance and the complete round of its distinguishing quality. No one would call a headless trunk a statue, much less a body. No one ought to call the present, imperfect condition of the world the mark of its final destiny. Let us wait and see; and we shall gradually find that the so-called evil, as Rabindranath has said, is only potential perfection; it is perfection in the imperfect stages of growth. We shall then understand the ephemeral or passing nature of sin and the verifiable fact that the real trend, the destined course, the pre-ordained purpose of the world is moral. We shall then understand

how inevitable it is for the very conception of morality, as distinguished from mere customary practice, that there should be a liability to err by choice ; how even omnipotence cannot evolve morality except under such conditions ; how a good God is pledged to design only goodness as the end of creation ; and how this postulate of philosophy is ratified by the history of human life.

We shall next consider the other half of the question — the existence of pain. How are we to interpret, how can we justify, the existence of pain in a world governed by an all-good and all-powerful God ? There are various kinds of pain : (1) pain which is the result of one's own sin ; (2) pain which is the result of others' sin ; (3) pain which is suffered by good and faithful men but is due to no sin ; and (4) pain which is suffered by the lower orders of creation which are not under the moral law.

(1) That sin should bring on, and entail, suffering — is this really inconsistent with the goodness (or the power) of God ? Do we wish the sinner should go exempt from pain and not reap the bitter fruit of his sin ? Shall not the man who injures be hurt ? Shall not the murderer who has killed take the consequences of his act ? Far from it ; we are keen, and rightly so, that sin should be punished. We set up courts of justice ; we enact laws, we do a thousand and one things, that sin may receive adequate punishment.

(2) Next, what is the meaning of one or more men suffering for the sins of others ? The father

bequeaths the taint of his sin to his innocent son. The husband communicates the stain of his transgression to his blameless wife. The erratic son brings misery to his aged parents. But what alternative would you recommend? Is it to the effect that each alone should bear the consequences of his or her own vice? At that rate, do you wish, too, that each should exclusively enjoy the fruits of his or her own virtue, and that the benefits of it should not extend to another at all? Is that proposition acceptable as the guiding principle of our life right through? Then, what do we understand by families, friendships, institutions and organisations? If we want unity and combination, the isolated individuals must be welded into well-formed bands, bodies, fraternities and communities. We must cast upon them the obligation of mutual participation and make them sharers in the joys and sorrows of one another so that the weal and woe of one shall be the weal and woe of another and the virtues and vices of one shall be communicated to another. Organised, united, consolidated life means co-partnership in all the vicissitudes of life. And is it not through these common joys and sorrows that the purest relations and the strongest affinities are formed, shaped, evolved and confirmed? Again, as, age after age, the sense of responsibility is developed, it appeals as a powerful incentive to morality with the thinking man that his immorality reacts also upon his dearest ones. The father who has become hardened in the habit of drinking is deterred by the consideration that his loved offspring will inherit his evil habit. It is therefore a stimulus to higher morality

that he cannot terminate the consequences of his act with himself but transmits them to others.

(3) Let us not fancy that pain is always an evil. Just as poverty is not always a disgrace, so pain is not always an evil. On the other hand, pain suffered is really so much sympathy evoked. George Eliot, in one of her writings, emphasises how the ultimate residue of all suffering and sorrow is sympathy. We learn to be sympathetic to others even because we are crushed under affliction ourselves. The Koran states that the good man is like a sugar-cane : the more it is crushed, the greater is the juice that comes out of it. There is a Sanskrit verse which says the good man is like the sandal tree that imparts its fragrance to the axe that cuts it. Therefore, pain so-called is only the process by which the best in a man is distilled out. We see how pride is humbled, how severity is softened, how selfishness is transmuted through pain and sorrow and how the martyr is exalted into the paradise of the hero through the purgatory of pain. Thus, pain proves to be a Divine ordinance for purification and perfection. One type of pain is sacrifice, self-abnegation, the surrender of what one holds dear. And *this* is one of the noblest virtues possible for any man. Therefore, heroism would be simply wiped out of the world, if there were not the test of pain. A hero is one who stands by duty in the face of pain. He sacrifices and surrenders his all, daunted by no pain and cowed down by no fear in the doing of what is due from him. And how poor should be the history of humanity if the mighty achievements of man through faith

triumphing over pain were eliminated from it ! This is one great service of pain and sorrow that it produces the noblest types of manliness and heroism. Hence, some one has rightly called it the sacrament of sorrow. Accordingly, as pain incurred in consequence of one's own sin is not only deserved but also remedially salutary to moral growth and as pain shared with the sinner is alike incidental to the law of interrelation and valuable as a further check upon his evil ways, so even pain caused and borne without reference to any sin is not less wholesome and efficacious as a training for character.

(4) Lastly, there is pain endured by the non-moral section of the world, namely, the animals. Here it is not possible fully to deal with the issue why there should be vast areas of woe along this line. Yet, relative to this phase of suffering, there are one or two considerations which may avail to reconcile us to the position ; and they are such as apply equally to the phase touched upon in the preceding section. A certain grand cosmic process of creation is going on. The world is subject not only to the passing laws appropriate to the different groups or classes of beings but also to the conditions of a universal process of evolution, of formation, of continuity, of resolution proceeding through aeons upon aeons. And that process, as it works itself out through illimitable ages, will necessarily come into clash at certain points with other and minor processes whose period of time is comparatively short. As goes the humorous story, a giant king and his dwarf went to war with the giant's enemy. They

faced the enemy and fought with him—the giant in his gigantic manner and the dwarf in his dwarfish manner. But the strokes of the enemy intended for the giant used to come down upon the head of the dwarf also. Thus he brought down upon himself all that terrible chastisement by allying himself with the giant. Similarly, in the vast process of the formation of worlds in which operations of momentous import on an extensive scale are evermore in full swing, this little world, with its tiny creatures on it sharing in the universal throb of life which is subject to mighty cosmic laws, must occasionally feel how those forces are unduly big, proportionately too stupendous, for it and receive a certain shock which in the full, grand process is a natural throb but which for this little globe means a tremendous cataclysm. We find that if two persons live together in a common mess, the one with strong digestive powers and the other with but a weak appetite, the latter cannot but feel the effect of the combined heavy menu upon his own system whereas the former feels nothing of the kind. Participation in a grand world-process which brings with it such common advantages as those of the laws of gravitation and the flow of light, brings in its train these occasional disruptions as well. They are all necessary concomitants of our little world participating in the universal scheme of things with its universal operations. Therefore, we must take the whole provision and not quarrel with the details. As we enter into the whole confederacy of the universe, it will not do to pick holes in the particulars here and there. Next, all acquired experience, as distinguished

from innate wisdom, must necessarily be through contrasts and opposites — the impact of contrary forces. As such, all sentient existence has got to augment and store up its experience even by means, inevitably, of a large measure of pain as a foil to the considerable measure of pleasure in this world. Without the experience of the one, there can scarcely be any real zest and relish for the other. It indicates only the goodness of God that pleasure is thus intensified, whetted and sharpened by the opposite experience of pain. How refreshing is a cup of cool water in summer, and how stinging by its very touch in chill weather! How welcome is warm clothing in winter, while being so pricking in the hot season! How agreeable is a handsome face after the eye has dwelt upon something ugly! How enrapturing are the notes of sonorous music following after some jarring sounds! How bracing is brisk exercise close upon some hours of tiresomeness! How engaging is the face of a friend after a long separation! How gratifying is delicious food invited by the pangs of hunger! These contrasts add to the keenness of pleasure inherent in the objects of enjoyment. It is really something of a token of God's goodness that the piquancy of pleasure should be enhanced by its counterpart in pain.

Finally, even as unlike kinds of electricity are mutually repellent, so seemingly unlike sentiments as between us and God create repellent feelings in us at times. You look at some one part or phase and ask

'Is this what God ought to do?' It is the good in you that raises the protest. And Carlyle urges that when you are inclined thus to protest, you have only to remember that that good instinct in you which raises the protest is also the doing of God. You are judging of the world by the suggestive ideal of goodness within, compared and estimated in the light of which the perceived goodness without appears imperfect. The imperfect good that is criticised and the ideal good that is criticising—these are both expressions alike of God's goodness. Thus God and man appear to be sometimes mutually repellent. But they can accord, as they ought to; and how? Firstly, by yoking all the available potential energy of inwardly revealed goodness to the service of outwardly realisable goodness in philanthropy. And secondly, by communing more and more with God, the Parent of all good and the Fountain-head of all righteousness, whereby we might receive more and more of insight into His goodness. Even as the shallow brook goes on making a gurgling noise while the deep stream is serenely silent, so, as I commune more and more with Him and imbibe more and more of His goodness, my voice of protest becomes hushed into the silence of satisfied joy.

If we thus discipline our life, we shall progress along the path of righteousness marked by the three great stages of (a) pleasure, which is mere sensual gratification, (b) happiness, which is of a higher species as intellectual delight and (c) blessedness, which is of the highest type as spiritual satisfaction. Of these, blessedness

is the felt and realised experience of harmony to which we give the name of goodness. Ruskin has said that the ideal of morality is not merely that we should be good but that we should enjoy goodness. Goodness is harmony with the great laws and the established order of the world. And blessedness is the enjoyment of it. Goodness is life in harmony with God. And blessedness is the feeling of good, harmonised life. Our concern, therefore, must be goodness; and God's gift will be blessedness. We seek to be good; and in so enabling us to be good, He rewards us with blessedness. Then, let us cultivate goodness and thus qualify ourselves to enjoy blessedness.

vii
A BIRTHDAY RETROSPECT *
(1933)

Sisters and Brothers,

It is literally, absolutely, true that I cannot, even by employing the greatest powers I ever possessed, be in a position — aye, even in anything like a half-perfect position — notwithstanding the best of my efforts to give expression adequately to what all I feel on this occasion. I confess I feel so dizzy in mind that I do not know what to say — where to begin and how to conclude. I would content myself with conveying to you my most heart-felt thanks in just a few words, leaving the rest to your imagination.

You are all familiar with the saying : Some are born great ; some achieve greatness ; and some, again, have greatness thrust upon them. I feel, apart from greatness, I am one of those on whom length of life is thrust. When the *sashti-poorthi* occasion came, I said I wondered how I had lived so long. To many others also it was a standing marvel in regard to one who had been given to revolting deliberately against all the rules of health—thinking of his breakfast at 4 in the evening and of his bed at 4 in the morning. It is now eleven years since that confession was made. I do not know how

*At the special Thanksgiving Service on the occasion of the seventy-first Birthday celebrations at Brahmopasana Mandir, Cocanada (28-9-'33).

long still this reversal of Nature's laws will be allowed to continue. But I calmly and cheerfully leave that issue in the hands of the Ordainer of all destinies.

The speeches that have gone before call to my mind an interesting story which has its own significant lesson for one like me. There was a house-agent whose business was to buy and sell houses for others. A certain person sent for this agent and said, 'Look here. I am so dissatisfied with my present dwelling. I want to dispose of it and go in for a new and a better house'. The agent said he would see to that. He inserted in the papers an advertisement in glowing terms about 'a house for sale'. The person who had entrusted the commission to him lighted upon this advertisement and exclaimed, 'What a splendid thing! So many conveniences—in fact, all that I have set my heart upon! Mark you, that is just the kind of house I am after.' Then answered the agent — 'Well, now, that is your own, your present house, so described in the advertisement. Now, will you abandon the idea of parting with it in disgust?' 'Ah, I did not know that the house I lived in possessed so many excellences! Now, surely, I will not sell it away.' For my part, likewise, I never felt I was so great until you all conspired this morning to impress it upon me that I had so many excellences in myself! They say a young man's head turns when he hears himself praised. But he may, at the same time, at least design to be great thenceforth. It is quite possible an old man's head also may swell with pride under similar circumstances; and, what is worse, he

may be apt to think he need not be greater than he is believed and made out to be. God save me, in His graciousness, from a temptation so grave as that!

I am most devoutly thankful to you all for having either said or by approval affirmed all the kind things uttered about me this morning. It is really immaterial whether I am or am not all that you so generously take me to be. If I am all that, thank God. If not, nobody is going to be deceived. What is material is that I should learn, and bring myself to own, my own faults in life's conduct. As regards the description of my having been at College a constant breaker of laws that I myself had made, I am not conscious of having been so serious a sinner; but now and then, I confess, I did commit the offence. A nice instance, as I now recall it, was that in connection with the study of *The Merchant of Venice*. That was one year the text for the F. A. Senior; and I had dwelt upon the famous eulogy of 'the quality of mercy'. Shortly after, there came the selection of candidates for the University Examination. I wanted to keep back one, Seshachala Rao. At the psychological moment, he laid hold of me in the class-room and confronted me with the point-blank query, 'Is it for this, after all, that you have taught us all that about the exercise of mercy?' This placed me in a dilemma. Either I must stick to my own rule and resolution or I must connive at its infraction and save the reputation of Shakespeare! 'Well, I will send you up', I said finally. He sat for the Examination; and of course,

as in duty bound, he failed. That is a different matter. The quality of mercy was not in the least stultified thereby. There were other rules also that came in for infringement in their own course. When the University Commission was with us, Mr. Mark Hunter, as its President, looked into our accounts. Going through the Fee Register, oh, he found the whole thing chaotic! 'So many arrears!', he exclaimed. 'How does that trouble you? You are only to satisfy yourself that the Register is kept. As for the incidence of arrears, the College is prepared to bear the brunt of it all, Government not being moved to undertake any share at all.' So I replied. He caught a Tartar; and the thing was not mentioned in the Report. In this connection, I must say one thing. That is at once a confession and a tribute. Such persistent violation of rules as to the Fee Register was possible, not because Venkata Ratnam was the Principal, but because the Maharajah of Pithapuram was the Patron. So let the credit be given where it is strictly due. Even if I spent any portion of my salary, I only did what little I could do by way of further needful relief.

When there was that great stir and commotion, that terrible agitation, of 1916 against me for the offence of not sending up a young man for the University Examination on account of the double disqualification of want of attendance and of progress, they thought the heavens were coming down upon me and the foundations of Pittapur Rajah's College were being dug up to the very bottom. 'Nothing short of the

immediate removal of the offending Principal will satisfy us.' So said our friends. 'Ha, then, I *will not* go', I answered. / When I first came to Cocanada as Principal, there happened something very interesting. You recall that story in Julius Caesar's life: he tripped and fell; people thought it a sign of weakness in him and an ill-omen for him; but in the very act of falling down upon the ground, he declared, 'Thus, Rome, do I lay hold of thee.' So, when I came, I was rushing on, the railway platform from one carriage to another to see where my old mother was to be found. I tumbled and fell and said, 'Thus I lay hold of Cocanada.' And so I did. I was not going to be removed from Cocanada and the College at Cocanada. When one makes up one's mind to be devoted to a thing, one will cling to it despite all opposition and all the forces seeking to dislodge one from it. How was it in my case? Not that I came to remain in my office till the latest date possible. I came to love the Institution. When my application was received, one of the members of the Committee remarked at one of its meetings, 'This does not look like an application but rather like the communication of a declaration and an authoritative statement that he is taking possession of the place.' After three months of a tornado of public agitation, I found myself securely established, and there was confirmed in me the determination that the Principalship of Pittapur Rajah's College should be the last appointment I should ever hold. This resolution, however, was mysteriously falsified for three years afterwards by the Vice.Chancellorship of Madras University. What

made we rejoice then was the general announcement to the effect that the former Principal of Pittapur Rajah's College had been called to the Vice-Chancellorship of the University. This circumstance I mention for the simple reason that it is the College that made me, not I that made the College. You are all acquainted with this familiar phenomenon : a man lives a random life with no particular aim; but once you put him in charge of a responsible office, and it really 'makes' the man. I hope friends will understand me aright when I say I would not be a member of the adjoining Club. For, that would be a diversion of interest; and, further, there I might hear my work criticised or I might be made to feel elated. When, later, what people call the Orphanage but I prefer to contemplate as the Home was established by God's grace, a friend was generous enough to say, 'Naidu garu is to be found mostly at the College or at the Orphanage and hardly ever at his house.' That was, in truth, the ambit of my existence. All this is relevant to one point: God, in His great mercy, brought me here ; He taught me to be dedicated to my work ; and He rewarded me in my work. That reward was : the Maharajah and Dr. Ramakrishna Rao. It is a great blessing when one is enabled to feel assured that one's work will not go out of one's hands. And through my successor, God graciously vouchsafed to me the guarantee of the success of my life.

One little point I would also mention with a grateful heart is this. Years before the 'Harijan propaganda' of today, God gave me some Harijan children

for my own. Not that they came of the 'Harijan' caste, so-called; but they were truly 'Harijans', God's (own) people. According to common parlance, mine was a higher caste than theirs. Yet we all lived in the Harijan spirit. We observed no caste. My children married in different directions: two of them married into the Christian community; another married a member of the Adi-Andhra community, now a Deputy Registrar of Co-operative Societies. That way, I had the blessing of intimate association with the Harijan community. As we come together and partake of a common dinner, the only condition observed is that it should be a vegetarian dinner. All this, again, is a mark of the especial grace of God.

Now, there are two other things mentioned today upon which I should like to dwell for a brief while. One is the introduction of girls into the School in my time. In 1911, we said we would admit girls. Some members of the Committee opposed the proposal. 'You wont be able to manage', they declared. 'Let us try', was our answer. Five years after that, in the agitation of 1916, when a big lawyer friend assured me that the admission of girl-pupils had been the root of the whole trouble, I asked him roundly, 'What do you lawyers know of the school-master's work?' And so great was the change effected in the atmosphere in course of time that old Malladi Venkatasastri garu used to call the girl-pupils 'my sisters' and they, in turn, would call him their 'little brother'! Thus we have had our teachers themselves of the old orthodox type converted

gradually to the gospel that education must remain incomplete unless the sex of our mothers also is educated. I so planned the reconstruction of the school buildings, as to have a block of eight rooms, one for each of the Forms in which we expected girl-pupils in the earlier stages, with myself as the watch-dog in the office-room close by. And within easy reach of those class-rooms was provided a retiring-room for the girls. Then I issued an injunction that all male members should pass, not along the verandah facing the retiring-room, but along the verandah on the other side. Now we have girls in all the Classes from the B. A. Senior down to the lowest. In this connection, I have a secret which I will pass on to you but which is not to be disclosed by you to the outside world! I confess I am more partial to girls than to boys. A boy has the birthright to my affection; but a girl has even to my reverence as the present-day representative of my mother.

The other subject is one that Mr. Ponnuswami Iyer has alluded to. How glorious were those days when we could impress upon all Andhradesa that the introduction of nautch-girls on festive occasions was not merely a stigma but truly an offence! Not because we hated the nautch-girl but because we loved her soul; therefore we had a strenuous campaign of non-cooperation in regard to the Nautch. Though we could not eradicate the evil, yet we succeeded in impressing upon the minds of a large section of people that, in all conscience, the Nautch was an institution that deserved to be eliminated. When I was at

Masulipatam, two or three of us friends were once sitting together. The *daffedar* of the Deputy Collector came up and said to my friends, "Master wants you; he invites you, sirs, to a nautch now going on at his place." And the man added, "I am expressly enjoined not to pass the word to Naidu garu; for Master said, 'He will pounce upon you like a dog'." All that is gone. It drove daggers into my heart to learn the other day that for the first time in the annals of the local *Gana-sabha* performances, there was introduced the feature of a nautch-girl's music. Why am I against it? Not at all through ill-feeling for music. Far from it. It is wholly because I want music to be divorced from immorality; and that is a principle I would apply equally to both the sexes. Now, the relationship between my dear old students and myself is not one of time but of eternity. Therefore, unto my old students I can talk with all the frankness of love. We are all co-pilgrims. And if you cherish me in your heart of hearts, will you accept this as my farewell request? Set your face against everything tending at all to diminish the value and potency of the Anti-Nautch Movement. A certain gentleman who was a Deputy Collector and the father of a lawyer friend of ours here was performing a marriage at Masulipatam. He sent out invitations; and it was stated in the programme that there was to be a *nautch*. A friend of mine wanted to do the little duty of attending. He and I were together in the carriage. Well, he went in and I stayed behind in the carriage. My friend mentioned it to the gentleman, who came out and said to me, 'Sir,

have I not sent you the invitation ? Why wait outside, please ?' 'Yes ; you have. Thanks. But I cannot give myself the pleasure of honouring your invitation, because you have invited me to a place where I cannot go'. That was my reply. To you I do not say, 'If you love me, you must love and follow everything that I do'. But here is a great truth — that if we fail to sustain the principle of purity even in our recreations and amusements, we are only injuring, wronging, degrading ourselves. Touch pitch and not be blackened ! Consequently, my earnest request, once again, to my dear old pupils is : Set your face against this returning tide of social impurity. Though not my old pupils, as some of you are not, I may claim you all as my heart's dear ones. And to you all, I say : Never countenance anything that tends to social impurity ; never give vogue and currency to the recognition of anybody — man or woman — of whom, in our present unfortunate social condition, it cannot be said he or she is honestly living a pure life. It is just as, in the case of drink, the poison veils itself behind the euphemism, 'abkari.' 'Abkari'—drinking water ! What water ? Nothing other than liquid fire and distilled damnation ! Again, now-a-days, you talk of 'film-star' and 'star-film' ! Yes ; *there* is one kind of star ; and that is will-o-the-wisp. Follow it ; and you are caught in the quagmire ! How beautifully these seductions advertise themselves — 'Come and see' ; 'See and enjoy' ! That is, 'Enjoy and get damned' ! Therefore, my renewed appeal to you is this : if you attach any significance to, and think there has been even an iota

of worth in, my life which merits being conserved and developed in other lives, set your face against the deluge of impurity in all its forms and shapes. Pure love is heaven itself. But when it has been not merely adulterated but poisoned with passion, it becomes hell. And then, what a terrible descent! Oh, you cannot strive too hard to popularise the ideal of social purity. Once I received an anonymous letter about a student of mine who had been absenting himself from my Saturday classes because he was given to immoral indulgences elsewhere at the week-end. I sent for him and said, 'Will you speak the truth? I see you have been absent, time after time, from our extra classes on Saturdays. I am told that is on account of a vicious habit contracted by you.' Well, with all his youthful mistakes, he had also youth's truthfulness. Youth is not youth unless it is wedded to truth; and he is a decrepit old man, however young, who does not stand by truth. So he admitted the ugly fact, the sad truth, about it. Then I plied him further: 'Have you taken thought of your wife—how she has been weeping over your behaviour?' 'Sir, from next Saturday this shall not happen'. He had three months yet before the Examination. I allowed some little time to elapse and then questioned him again, 'How does it fare with you now?' 'Well, sir, you can send for my wife and ask her'. The boy kept his word and shook off the serpent once for all. Yes; such an experience is an elixir of life, a balm, a tonic unto my heart. On another occasion, about another young man, the members of the Hostel came up to me and said, 'Sir, Our

fellow-inmate, Subbarazu, smokes cigars'. I summoned him before me and said, 'Well, Subbarazu, what really is the matter?' 'Yes, sir; I contracted the habit while in the Matriculation class elsewhere. Not easy to put it away, sir.' 'Very good; I will grant you a month's time; then I will see what account you will give of yourself'. The month's time given passed away; and he said, 'Sir, you can ask anybody whether I still continue to be guilty'. Now, these are the rewards of a teacher's life—to have dear students who make good promises and in practice vindicate themselves as well as their teachers. Set your face like adamant against all varieties of impurity. No matter if you are hasty in thought, if you are offensive in expression. Provided you keep unsoiled the truth, the health and the sanctity of your lives, all those other faults will soon be outgrown. Once slip by a single step along the wrong direction; and you do not know where you are slipping. Be assured there is nothing lost for the true issues of life in discarding forbidden things. It is, on the other hand, a gain, an immense gain, to be able, by God's grace, to feel, 'Not by eye, nor by ear, nor by mind, have I sinned against any daughter of God'. We have for our national ideal of youth Prahlada, one of whose virtues was that he never looked any woman in the face: 'కన్నులొకి నన్యకాంతలద్దంబైన మాతృభావమునేసిమఱువాడు.' It is not simply that he would not go into any sphere that exposed a woman to his view; but he would actually turn his gaze away even when she fell within his ken. And the real reference here is not merely to the pose of the body but to the attitude of the soul: 'మాతృ

భావము నేసి'. Hold by that as the ideal of your life. A precept in the Mahabharata, as versified by Griffith, runs to this effect :

'Look upon thy neighbour's wife
As on her that gave thee life'.

A woman may injure herself ; but I should not be a party to her self-injury. Lawyers will tell you — I dabbled in law years ago — that while adultery is a matter of mutual consent, one commits rape in reference even to an immoral woman, that is, when the offence is perpetrated against her will. Higher than all this, you can be guilty of immorality with your own wife unless you treat her as your co-enjoyer. Passion seeks self-satisfaction ; but love seeks the satisfaction of the partner. If you are right in that direction, you cannot be wrong in other directions. 'Who is she?', a magistrate used constantly to enquire in regard to each of the cases that came up before him; for he was persuaded that at bottom some woman or other was concerned in each offence. On one occasion, an employer was charged by his servant with the complaint that the ladder he had furnished to him for climbing over a wall was not strong enough and consequently the man had had to suffer a fall. 'Who is she?', asked the magistrate. For he was positive that there must have been a 'she' somewhere even in an occurrence of that kind. And by careful cross-examination, he could elicit the fact that it was not the ladder that was shaky but that the man, in course of mounting it, had chanced to turn his glance towards a

woman passing by and thus had managed to slip down. Now, man and woman are so intertwined ; and howsoever it may be in magisterial cases, in the great critical issues of life, we are bound to keep this relationship sound and pure. Take the vilest woman, comparatively speaking. As she turns to you, say '*amma*' to her ; and she is at once tongue-tied ; she cannot crack jokes with you ! I will conclude this portion of my talk with a story. He whom we honour as Buddha the Enlightened had a disciple handsome and attractive. A certain courtesan sent word to him : 'Come and meet me'. And his reply was : 'Yes ; I will go to you in due time'. This woman committed offence after offence till the law punished her with the amputation of limbs. She was thrown away from the haunts of men. Buddha's disciple is now by her side. 'What, have you come to taunt me now ? You did not come when I sent for you !' 'No ; I come in due time, as I said even then. This *is* the due time — not when the attractiveness of the body but the hunger of the soul is yours'. So he places her head upon his lap and tends her with the utmost sympathy ; and she expires in his hands with looks of grateful reverence. So, there will be express or occult invitations to you ever so many at every step. Say, 'I will come in due time'. And go as a brother, as a doctor, as a preacher, would go—with a praying soul and an affectionate heart and a nursing hand, not only doing your duty but sanctifying your own soul.

Finally, as for the Birthday, I gratefully thank you, one and all, for having shown and proved how

large a place is vouchsafed to me in the affections not only of my own students but of the citizens of Cocanada and others — the hundreds here representative of the thousands elsewhere that truly love me and cherish me. The only thing I can do is to pray devoutly to God to shower His choicest, richest blessings of the spirit upon you all. When Akbar was born, Humayun had only pieces of musk to present to friends about him. And they, in appreciation of the gift, said, 'As the fragrance of this musk spreads around, so may the fame of your new-born child spread all over, far and wide!' So, I am an old person and have no gift to give you but my prayer and my love. Both go up to God with the supplication that each of you may prove, in his or her own sphere, a blessing unto himself or herself and likewise to all around. I once more offer you my heartiest thanks. Here or hereafter—it matters not, for it is but a passing thing — we are all one round the Altar of God; and that is everywhere. May God bless each one of you to thrive and grow to be a centre of light and a spring of love for evermore!

SERVICES
AND
SERMONS

I
SERVICE
WITH SERMON ON
RECONSECRATION*
(1938)

UDBODHANA

HYMN—*Rammu nahridayammunu pranesa gaikommu* (Telugu)

Om ! Parabrahmanenamah ! Om ! Anandamoorthayenamah ! Om ! Pranesayanamah !

We have invited and welcomed our *Pranesa*, the Lord of our whole being, the sovereign Preserver of our full existence. We have obeisantly declared that He is the Abode of *Santhi* (Peace), that tranquillity which is the very atmosphere of Divine Being. Have we so prepared our hearts, have we so sanctified our souls, as to accord a sincere and genuine, whole-hearted and trustful welcome to Him ? We are here in body ; are we likewise in spirit — feeling His presence and rapturously embracing Him in our hearts and souls ? Ours is the God-granted privilege thus to receive the Lord of this measureless universe even into the sanctified shrine of the self. Unto us alone as His beloved ones He has vouchsafed this bliss of receiving Him and worshipping

*At Suryarao Bangalow, Cocanada, in connection with the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Andhra Brahma Sadhanashram (19-2-'38).

Him and rejoicing in Him and rendering our all unto Him in the sanctuary of the soul. Have we made ourselves fit to become the recipients of this Divine gift? As we recall the dark, dreary background of neglected and even wasted life, we shudder to think that we have the boldness, the temerity, to say, 'Thou art the Lord of our hearts; and we accord our welcome unto Thee'. Are our hearts instinct and alive with the sweet and sacred sense of His teeming presence in us? Oh, the dreadful, dreadful memory that oppresses this wretch of a sinner with the weight of unredeemed and unforgettable iniquity — the whole iniquity of a misspent, an abused, a prodigal life! Yet, what shelter, what retreat, what resort, what rest, is there for me, the sinner, but to say: 'Oh Thou, I do want Thee, none needs Thee more. Without Thee I am worse than dead, absolutely debased and false. Do Thou come into me, not to receive the welcome of a child, but generously to accept the prostrations of a prodigal. So let Thy abounding grace transform even this prodigal into Thine adoring, awe-inspired, all-surrendering worshipper'. This and this alone is to be our supplication; and only to this noble end has our whole life to be adapted and shaped.

And as we are here brought together, as we believe, even by the all-gracious God, may He in His benig-
nancy — unsought, undesired, unappreciated — vouch-
safe unto us the blessing of realising His presence so
that, thrilling with the quickening consciousness and
feeling jubilant over the sanctifying power of that
presence, we may be made, for all our lives, devoted

worshippers of God with mind and heart, soul and strength, aye, all the homage of our multifarious offerings! May He vouchsafe unto us this supreme blessing of adoring Him, of rendering unto Him that *aradhana* which evidences at once the sanctity of God and His intimacy with us! How absolutely holy in Himself yet how unspeakably near and dear He is to us! So shall our *aradhana* bring this sweet experience home to us as we submit our humble, reverent supplication that He be revealed unto us in all the glory of His eternally blessed Self of Love.

Oh, ever-adorable One! The joy, the rapture, the bliss, the ecstasy of adoring Thee that Thou hast, in Thine abounding grace, vouchsafed even unto the prostrate sinner — this must be and is his only appeal to Thee in raising heart and soul in supplication and importunity to Thee to enter into him and sanctify his being. Thou art the truly adorable One, the Adored of all. He who is not Thy adorer, he who worships Thee not — he misses the whole beauty, sanctity, richness, effulgence of life. On this blessed occasion, we turn to Thee and appeal to Thee to disclose Thy sweet, sanctifying presence unto us. Thou art the Adored of all. Thy name is 'the adorable, adored God', May we render our adoration unto Thee with all the joyousness of entrancing worship!

ARADHANA

*Om ! Sathyam Jnanamanantham Brahma Ananda
roopamamritham Yadvibhathi Santham Sivamadwaitam
Suddhamapapariddham !*

Thou the True, the Omniscient, the Infinite! Thou art the Eternal *Brahman* for ever abiding in Thyself with all the profundity of Truth, all the abundance of Wisdom and all the illimitability of Infinity. Truth Thou art, Wisdom Thou art, Infinity Thou art in Thyself and always. Truth is Thy being; Wisdom is Thy effulgence; and all-comprehensive Consciousness and Infinity is the range and magnitude of Thy all-transcending Self. Didst Thou not, in Thine infinite love and interminable solicitude for us all, come out of Thyself to picture forth all Thy bliss and all Thy sanctity, all that is in Thine immortal being as *Anandam* and *Amritham* — if only Thou didst abide in Thine own self — oh, how inconceivable this whole universe should be! Therein is Thy supreme Love in self-abnegation, in self-revelation, in self-donation, in all-embracing and all-perfecting providence. That is how we are brought to feel the unutterable, unimaginable depth and vastness of Thy love which would not be self-content but, by the very creative abundance of its own ever-self-manifesting being, comes out into this wonderful expression of *Anandam* and *Amritham*. The whole creation rings in resonance, the entire universe is jubilant, with that chant of *Anandam*, entrancing bliss and ecstasy. That *Anandaroopam* Thou art. Thy very self-expression it is — Beauty raying forth radiant in the whole expression of the universe. And in that *Anandam* Thou dost embrace us so that we are transformed, transfigured, in the rapture of inexhaustible ecstasy. Life is so abundantly affluent with this self-expressing love of Thine. And even as it is divine, it stands

imperishable, invincible. Its profundity — its range, its reach, its vastness—who can measure? And yet all that is flowing incessantly into our thoughts and feelings, desires and wishes, aspirations and endeavours — nay, pouring into every fibre of our being — with its *amritam*, its immortal efficacy. The very stars tell of it. The flowers repeat its tale. The rivulets convey its murmur. The groves are reverberant with its melody. Every blade of grass, rich with emerald life, speaks of it. The dust underneath, as it gently bears us up in self-denying serviceableness, uncomplainingly tells its story, the story of Thy loving and maternal solicitude for the bared foot. The sun, or in the glow of the morning or in the glory of the evening, reiterates the same diurnal round of Thy *Anandam* for our enlightenment. The moon takes up the same gospel and proclaims — how tenderly and caressingly! — that Thou dost embrace every creature of Thine. Every drop of blood coursing through our veins bounds with the pulsation of Thy *Anandam*. The throbbing soul testifies to it. The feeling heart vibrates with the music of its messages. In the family, in the whole circle of human interests and affinities, in all, it is Thy *Anandam* that is announcing itself. Thou art the God vouchsafing immortality unto each child of immortality: *amrithasyaputhrah*. As we are thus rendered immortal, Thou dost, in the fulness of Thy grace and mercy, make this immortal life for us incalculably rich with the peace and harmony of fraternal unity with all creation. Oh Thou Giver of *Santhi*, if only we would receive it into us as Thy Divine gift, how we should feel enriched

with all that makes life serene and sacred ! And that profundity of *Santhi* which, as it enters the soul, proclaims not merely its emancipation from the lower but also its exaltation into the higher self — how could it express itself, how could it work out its own proper nature, except in *Sivam* — the harmonious inter-weaving of all souls into one fraternity of goodwill ? How, indeed, could we live except as welded into the oneness of divinely possessed humanity ? Then, as we are thus unified into the embrace of the confraternity of adoring souls, Thou art brought home into our lives as *Suddham*, Holiness itself — the Holiness which forms the very acme of the perfection of Thy creation. Thou hast brought us forth out of Thyself. Thou dost embrace, harmonise and unify us in Thyself. And through all the reaches of time and all the processes of growth, Thou dost sanctify us with holiness — the realisation of God in man and the fulfilment of man in God. It is thus *Suddham*, not merely untainted and stainless but truly fragrant and effulgent with self-communicative holiness. We behold there the purpose of Thy creation — to rear unto Thyself an interminable procession of adoring children participating in Thy bliss and illustrating Thy holiness.

We would praise and glorify Thee even with the spontaneous outflow of love and reverence as Thine own self-surrendering and entirely trustful children. Ours be the faith that says, 'We are wholly God's, even as God is wholly ours !' Blessed be Thy name !

DHYANAMU

As we praise and glorify Thee and realise how we are of the substance of Thy being, we naturally long for, and seek, intimate and enrapturing communion with Thee—not merely to say Thou art the great God of goodness but to feel that, with all Thy greatness and goodness, Thou art enthroned in our souls, aye, inwoven into the very fabric of our being. We yearn to come into the embrace of living, loving, communion with Thee. Vouchsafe unto us this deeper bliss, deep beyond all rapturous adoration—even the bliss of unspeakably intimate, all-thrilling, all-entrancing directness of converse, receiving Thyself into our souls and there saying, not with word, thought or even feeling, but through vivid experience, ‘Thou art the bliss-giving, Thou art the blessed One’.

Praised and blessed be Thy name that, even in Thy majesty of glory, Thou deignest to come down into our hearts and reveal Thyself as our own dear God ! It is not thinking of Thee ; it is not reflecting on Thee ; but receiving Thee, embracing Thee. This is the ecstasy, the transporting bliss, Thou dost vouchsafe unto Thy children. And with this rapturous joy in our hearts, we sing Thy glory in all its amplitude and effulgence.

(Congregational chant)

Thou art *Ekam*, One only without a second, all-sufficing for all the needs, interests, wants, deficiencies and aspirations, the adoring and self-consecrating designs and purposes of man. We praise and glorify

Thee, and we render ourselves unto Thee as the one sure Pilot across the solemn main of life. We seek shelter in Thee, as under Thy pilotage alone our bark is safe and sure of its destination. Thus, throwing ourselves upon Thee with childlike confidence, we beseech Thee to grant us the enrichment, fulfilment and transfiguration of life.

*Asathoma sadgamaya thamasoma jyothirgamaya,
mrithyormamrithamgamaya, aviraveermayedhi rudra
yatthe dakshinam mukham thena mampahi nithyam.*

Out of untruth into truth, out of darkness into light, out of death into life immortal — that is the divinely ordained progress held in store to every soul. So, we beseech Thee, do Thou fulfil Thy purpose in us. Thine is the holy yet maternally benignant, smiling face in whose radiance we live, by whose wealth of love we are enriched and cherished evermore. As Thine eternal arms are around us, may Thy effulgence stream into us and make us both secure and blessed in Thee — all out of Thy free grace and unto Thy glory! Thou supreme Ordainer of all destinies, Thou hast made us for Thyself ; and life fulfils itself only as it renders itself unto Thee. We come unto Thee this morning to renew this solemn, sacred confession of faith, not simply to sing Thy praises, not merely to set forth the petition of our needs. We come unto Thee to tell Thee, as Thou hast disclosed it unto us, how we hold fast with all the surcey of conviction to the faith that we are meant for Thee and Thee alone. Unmindful of the vicissitudes of

fortune, may we realise with all the intensity of inwardly assured faith that, gaining only as it gives and rejoicing alone in reciprocity as the pledge of self-fulfilment, life comes of Thee, is rendered back to Thee and becomes blessed in being thus resumed into Thee!

UPADESAMU

Sister and Brother Devotees of God,

We all know and rejoice to know that we are come here to consecrate ourselves, through worship and self-dedication, once again to the will and the ways of the Lord. With that desire and determination, let us address ourselves together to the thrice-sacred duty of once again realising, through His grace, how blessed, indeed, is this self-consecration. Sisters and brothers, even this is one proof of the grace and glory of God that, as out of dust comes the food of the living and growing being, even so out of the dust under the feet of holy ones the sinner, too, is set up and ordained, beyond his expectations, to confess the grace and goodness of God. It is not the sinner's transgression but the Saviour's sanctification that can achieve this great result. With that trust, we turn for a few moments our purest and sincerest thoughts and feelings to this theme of self-dedication to God.

My esteemed brothers, Raj Naidu garu and Kalyana Swami Naidu garu, did me, the other day, the kindness of telling me that it was their ardent desire that I should lead in prayers on this solemn occasion. They

recalled that the Institution known as the Andhra Brahma Sadhanashram had been inaugurated even in this place and that somehow it had fallen on me then to pronounce the word of hope and benediction. And they stated that they and those for whom they spoke were earnestly desirous that, as then so now, my tongue and heart — a tongue so laden with ignorance and a heart so perverted by transgression! — should once again utter the word of hope and pronounce the message of benediction. To an invitation of that nature, from that quarter and unto that purpose, notwithstanding the heavy weight of unworthiness, there could be but one answer ; and it was given. It is quite out of place, it is utterly beyond the range of the present purpose, to ask either what my own position is in relation to the Institution that has brought us together this day or how certain incidents and utterances of the time gone by might be interpreted as to my own unworthiness. 'Come and worship together' ; and I am ready : the soul must say 'Welcome'. It is with that readiness of brotherly willingness that I come here to render praise and thanks to God in conjoint worship.

Introducing his Lectures on *Brahmasadhana*, Pandit Sitanath Tattwabhusan said, 'I am not a *siddha* but only a *sadhaka*'. If that is the admission of one so blessed as he with the wealth of God-consciousness, how can I lure myself into the belief that I am possessed of even an iota of the sacred experience of *sadhana*? No, emphatically no ; I cannot speak with the light of sustained experience but only with the occasional

gleam vouchsafed by pure grace from time to time gleam enveloped in the darkness of a sin-tainted life. This I confess, as I must, before I undertake to address any words fairly appropriate to the occasion. So, in that spirit, you will receive my faltering, imperfect words and bless them with loving acceptance for what they are worth.

We turn to two familiar texts in the *Bhagavad-gita* — the first from the fourth chapter which declares in emphatic language that God manifests from age to age for the upholding of truth and the replenishment of righteousness — the vindication of *dharma*; and the second from the eighteenth chapter which, in His name, calls upon the soul to relinquish all acts and activities expected to promote the religious life and to trust and confide in Him alone in order to attain the serenity of absolute fearlessness. These, in fine, are the two texts which sum up God's own covenant with man. Then, as a complement to these texts, as furnishing the counterpart to them, we take two texts from the Lord's Prayer—"Thy kingdom come!" "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!" This represents man's vow and pledge in response to that promise from God. The offer and the acceptance thus constitute the complete circle of human existence in the effulgence and affluence of its immortal progress. On the one side, we are told how God has taken into His own hands the salvation of man, how He has made it His own concern and how He is ever interested and always active in that direction. Ever vigilant to that end through

all processes of growth, He manifests as the Sanctifier. And offering Himself thus as the Custodian of our sanctity and salvation, He tells us to repose the fullest confidence in Him alone — not depend on auxiliary help as well but, in the spirit of '*anyadha saranam nathi*', to look exclusively to Him not merely to free us from fear but to realise His holiness in us. On the other side, we are reminded of the response, the reaction, due from us to God's action in His coming in with the double promise of busying and occupying Himself with our sanctification and impelling in us the desire to perfect His aim and bring it into abundant harvest. 'Since Thou art manifesting Thyself not only from age to age but every moment', says man, 'may Thy kingdom come into me! And as Thou art manifesting Thyself to uphold *dharma*, may it be established in me! As Thou dost breathe in me the confidence that if I cast myself upon Thy protection, I shall be secure in it, I do respond by saying 'Amen'.' Accordingly, these two great teachings from two holy scriptures complete each other: God incoming, sustaining and fulfilling; and man supplicating, self-consecrating and God-glorifying. Here is the whole round of life.

And *Brahmasadhana* consists in realising this benediction in every transaction and occupation of our being. The endeavour after the life divine shows how it spreads over the whole range of human existence. Not now and here but always and everywhere, this covenant should be kept and fulfilled. And how? Not by our absolute effort but through self-surrender and

self-dedication to God. He has meant man for Himself ; and, therefore, man shall say, ' So I render myself unto Thee'. In fact, it must become a matter of mutual attraction as between the magnet and the iron, the one pulling and the other allowing itself to be pulled. Also, as, in the physical process, the iron filings are drawn close to one another, so, in the spiritual, soul draws soul to itself as well. The God-created life becomes creative love in man, not merely God-adoring but self-propagating love. Thus, we have to realise that if He has meant us for Himself, it is not simply for passive submission. ' Thy will be done !' Yes; but the active carrying out of that will over the whole area of life should itself become a ceaseless prayer attended with praise and self-occupation with all that pleases God. '*Thasmin preethih thasya priya-karya sadhanancha thadupasanameva*'. We often miss the presence and significance of the term '*sadhanancha*' in this formula. It is not merely doing acts agreeable to the Lord, but it is making a discipline of such conduct that renders our work into worship. It is only thus that the self-donating God comes out to manifest in all the concerns of life, continuing and fulfilling His purpose therein and thereby. His is a threefold gift unto us : He creates ; He guides and supports ; and He fulfils. He is the Inaugurator, the Inspirer and the Sustainer. Thus, throughout, He companions and completes what He has started. Thus, in short, He is All-in-all, even the Self of our selves. When, on our side, we say, ' Thy Kingdom come !', how glibly we do so, as though we wish His Kingdom to come

anywhere except into our hearts! The capital of that Kingdom is properly to be established and centred in our souls and thence to range out in ever-expanding vistas through all creation. Then only must and shall His will be done — not that we may be gratified but sanctified. Remember always it is first into the heart that His Kingdom is to come, thence to expand through the entire creation. His will must thus be carried out first in all our activities. As the Parsee scripture puts it, *manasni* (with thought) *govasni* (with speech) and *kunasni* (with action). shall thou fulfil thy life to a noble purpose. Then every little concern of life comes to be interpreted in terms of God, and time itself in terms of eternity. The process of *sadhana* is that of the transfiguration of the human creature into the image of the Divine Creator through the vast range of time — not only now but always. It has been observed that *sadhana*, to be complete, must introduce the infinite God into every minute detail — as Von Hugel says, even into the prosaic packing of things. As we think of our meal, we trace it back to the miller grinding the corn into flour, further to the reaper taking it to the mill and, perhaps if still further back, to the sower planting the seed in the sod at the start. And we regard ourselves as happy if we go so far as to convey thanks in the mind to the sower, the reaper and the miller. But we forget that back of it all is

‘the shower

And the sun and the Father’s will’.

It is ‘the Father’s will,’ in literal truth, that works the various manipulations until the

loaf of bread is brought to our mouth. Likewise, it is the Father's presence that sanctifies all occupations. A group of scavengers in the north once claimed to be the highest caste because they removed the dirt created by others. It is, as the poet-mystic says, the sense of doing things in His name and for His sake that makes drudgery divine. So, sweeping may be done with a soul intent on the Divine. *Sadhana*, then, is far from an occasional endeavour; it is a lifelong self-dedication to His will in all things and under all conditions alike—as life emerges into time or is reclaimed into eternity; as the flower blooms with fragrance or fades into dust; as the heart rejoices over triumph or is weighed down by defeat; as the tongue is sweet with eloquence or palsied into silence; as virtue's arm raises the standard of truth or oppression's engine smites it to the ground. For, in the ultimate analysis or, more properly, synthesis, there is never a defeat, never an aberration, but only fulfilment in mysterious ways—not in your or my way but in God's way, this latter now and again running inscrutably counter to the former. To receive this counter-check and to flow on in its direction—this is the part of the true *sadhaka*. It is not so to train ourselves but to beseech God so to train the mind and the heart and the soul.

Now, as the distinguishing characteristics of a life of *sadhana*, we may primarily and profitably fasten attention upon three qualities: tranquillity, gentleness and strength. It is the doing of things and the dealing with things in the spirit of calmness, with the

temper of sweetness and under the certainty of steadfastness. A typical reflex of this spiritual blend is what we get in Denham's description of the Thames in his poem, *Cooper's Hill*:

'Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
Strong without rage; without o'erflowing, full.'

Tranquillity, the first and foremost among the genuine marks of the *sadhaka*, reflects an all too patent characteristic of God Himself, never hurrying, never tarrying. Then, sweetness amid all bitterness of surroundings reproduces the very gentleness of God like the descending dew, the encircling zephyr and the inflowing breath of life. It cuts prejudice against the grain with a kindly word evermore, not merely the word that is courteous but the word that fills the aching heart with the balm of hope — even the hope that underneath are the Everlasting Arms and all is well in God's world. Lastly, and as a fruition of the above, there is that constancy of strength over against all earthquake shocks of accident and incident which no outside power can shake because it is founded upon the being of God — the sense of security which stands rooted in the Divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we may. Firm with the firmness of that strength, the *sadhaka* towers up, foursquare to all the winds, like one of those solid citadels reared upon the foundations of the hill-top exposed to storm and tempest but also with a basement secure enough to face the onslaughts of wind and weather.

A character thus compounded achieves results remarkable beyond any of the exploits of a thundering career. And that is because there is a unique responsiveness from the human heart to every touch of sympathy. Place your tender finger upon the throbbing, feverish forehead of the sufferer by your side, and at once there is induced in him the sense that fever, after all, is transient and health is permanent. Not the desponding tear, not the condescending tear but the loving tear works no end of marvels. It wins its way by silent appeal as nought else can.

There is so much to say. But I am not competent. So I shall not tire you further than by briefly pointing to the bearings of prayer upon the discipline of self-restraint. For, *Sadhana*, in its essence, is, indeed, far more than mere temperance ; it is more comprehensive than asceticism. In self-restraint, we train the senses. In prayer, reaching out towards God, we mature the spirit and thus achieve, under God, the prime purpose of life.

Sisters and brothers, pardon these rambling words. The heart is full which says, 'Blessed is the life dedicated to Thee. I have nothing to hold back from Thee. Thou art my All-in-all. So may I prove by all my aspirations and activities that I do receive, value and cherish Thee as my All-in-all !' Be it never once forgotten, then, that out of silence come the great issues of life. It is not the silence of the mind arrested in its normal functioning. But it is the silence of

devout meditation, of pious contemplation, devoting some part of the day systematically to a receptive dwelling upon the intimate relationship between the human and the Divine and that, through renewed self-consecration unto the glorifying of God. Blessed be the name of the All-glorious, the All-gracious One !

PRARDHANA

Unto us Thou art all that we desire and cherish, our All-in-all. Would that we had the gratitude to render our all unto Thee ! But, alas, how prone we are to receive our all from Thee, yet how loth to render our all unto Thee ! This is our blackest iniquity. Oh, do Thou teach us to renew, with the soul's inmost consecration, the vow of self-offering unto Thee. Then, what shall we miss ? Into the minutest concerns do Thou weave Thyself, and grant that we be preoccupied with the living presence of Thy holy self even amidst the most casual of occurrences.

Bless all of us. How may we glorify Thee with grateful thanks for the quarter-century of grace now being left behind but by rendering ourselves afresh to Thee with the trustfulness of the child and the faithfulness of the slave ? How condescending of Thee that Thou dost call us Thine own children ! If only we held fast to Thee as our Parent, how full of heavenly sweetness life would then become for us even here below ! Oh, do Thou imbue us with the sense and inspire us with the sentiment that will ever make us feel

earthly life itself to be no other than a pilgrimage into eternal, immortal life. Blessed, blessed, blessed be Thou and Thy name now and for ever !

Om ! Brahma Kripahi Kevalam !

Om ! Santhih ! Santhih ! Santhih !

Om ! Harih Om !

II
'DEEKSHASWEEKARAM' SERVICE *

with Sermon on
SPIRITUAL LIGHT

(1930)

ŪDBODHANA

HYMN — *Randu manahrudpeetamuna Brahmanda nadhunda* (Telugu)

Om! *Brahmandanadhaye namah* ! Our humble yet hearty salutations, our reverent yet rejoicing adorations, we offer to the *Brahmandanadha*. Who can measure that Divine mercy which, while in its might commanding and ruling numberless worlds, at the same time eagerly desires and seeks to enter into our little hearts? Behold, the Monarch of the universe majestically marching across the sky in all the glory of countless stars and orbs and He, the Supreme Sovereign, nevertheless coming down and seeking to enter the humble, narrow, lowly doors of our hearts ! Oh the mercy, the supreme mercy, the condescending mercy, the self-forgetting mercy of God that He thus comes in as if He is in need of it, as if He cannot do without it ! Who can render thanks for that Divine mercy ? *Brahmandanadha*, Thou that lackest nothing, at whose beck and call the teeming millions of suns

*'Initiation' of Mr. P. Venkata Narayana at Pithapuram (28-12-'38).

and stars stand reverent in awe-inspired submission, Thou layest aside all glory and grandeur and comest into the sinner's heart. Great God, good God, gracious God, how can I render thanks unto Thee for this supreme act of mercy? Blessed be Thy name; blessed be Thy name!

My Sisters and Brothers,

A brother of ours has come here to be initiated into, and to receive, *Brahmadharmadeeksha*. As there can be no feast without a preparing, purifying bath, let us, with the tears of penitent hearts and out of the baptismal font of adoring souls, now purify ourselves that we may enter into the bounty of our merciful God. When He deigns to come down into my lowly, sin-stained heart, you may feel sure, you may have no doubt, He will joyously enter into the heart of every one. Receive Him, welcome Him, hail Him into the heart of hearts; rejoice in Him with the very life-blood dancing in ecstasy; and then bless and glorify Him. As we have sung '*Brahmandanadhundu*', He is the Lord Supreme of all creation—*Rabbul Alameen*, Lord of innumerable worlds, as the Islamic scripture calls Him. But He values not that sovereignty over orbs but sets greater store by this welcome into our hearts. '*Nindukoluvvundanga vacchenu*': He comes to display and disclose Himself in all the awe-inspiring fulness and sublimity of His glory to be enthroned in our hearts. As He is seated in the heart, we cannot but be pure and righteous. Our souls fall into the mood of praise and of worship. Let us sing the chant of glorification and

say, 'He is here; He is within', and bless Him with the *nādam*, the music, the harmony of our souls. Bless Him; and as you bless Him, feel blessed that He has come to dwell in each one of us. Oh the fortune of it, the honour of it, the rapturous ecstasy of it that He should thus so adjust Himself as to be reduced into the limits of our hearts!

DHANYAVADASAMARPANAMU

Thou all-merciful God, how can my frail words thank and bless Thee for this supreme gift of Thine that Thou comest to dwell in our hearts? The sun is nothing unto Thee. The stars and orbs are of no account unto Thee. The teeming millions of creatures Thou passest by. Thou knockest at the portal of the heart of each one of us and sayest, 'Child of My spirit, I am thine; be thou Mine'. With this greeting, invitation and message, Thou comest into each one of us. Be Thou seated there; be Thou enthroned there; be Thou enshrined there. Reveal unto us all the charm of Thy beauty and all the sweetness of Thy love. Our nerves are athrill with the vibrating joy of Thy indwelling presence. Blessed be Thy name now and for ever!

UPADESAMU

My brother, Venkata Narayana garu,

Let my first word be a word of soul-sincere rejoicing over the thrice-holy, thrice-happy desire you have indicated of being enfolded within the Temple of God. This is a great, solemn moment, a supreme

moment, in your life when you are come to receive this *Brahmadharma deeksha*, to make this covenant, to take upon yourself this truly sublime responsibility of being a lover and worshipper of God. May He who is the inner Witness of every soul reveal Himself to you on this occasion with all the vividness and compelling conviction of His presence in your soul that, thrilled with the awe of sanctity at that Presence, you may take the *deeksha* with the fitting pledge of complete devotion unto your God!

It is a common piece of knowledge that, as the astronomers tell us, the vast limitless universe is all one, not one merely in the static sense of a circle surrounding all but one in the rich, inspiring sense of an undivided whole with all the myriad beings and objects comprised in it. And as the astronomers again tell us, this wide universe, the range and circuit of which even human imagination cannot take in, was one vast, baffling nebula thin and almost untouchable, to start with. There could not be found in it any substance solid enough to be held fast. It was all tenuous vapour. But one peculiarity with it was that it was light, all light; and that, a light which could hardly be seen. Such was the wonderful mystery about it that it contained within itself all the countless stars and orbs that have come out of it. The nebula would not be stationary, would not remain passive and dead but must move and revolve with a constant stir in itself. Out of this impalpable nebula there came out detached clotted, congealed portions that became stars. These

detached themselves; yet they were of the same substance as the nebula. Not different from it, they yet came together into little bodies. They had one property. The whole nebula contained light. They accordingly became centres of light and began to send out light. The light spread everywhere, and not one inch of space remained unprovided. Thus, invisible light—so to speak, inoperative light—came into view and into operation. So, while the nebula had only one quality, each star has two qualities: it preserves light; and it sends out light: it contains light; and it conveys light. Now, we are having our whole life in God. Not one beat of the heart nor, again, one speck of space but God is there. It is misleading to say God does this and God sends that. He comes in Himself. It is the literal truth that we live and move and have our being in God, even as the whole universe lived, moved and had its being in nebulous light. Not different, not cut off, but parcelled as its own offspring, there came out of the fire-mist millions of stars so that none could count them. Yet each became not only the container of original light but also the conveyor of it. So the invisible world is made visible. Spiritual stars come into being in the infinite vastness of God's spirit; and we say, 'Here are the foot-prints, the tokens, of God'. Thus the invisible God is made visible by those who take His *deeksha*. The Unseen is seen; and the Unfelt is felt. Every one who takes God's *deeksha* becomes a star in the vastness of His spirit; and from him goes forth spiritual light. Look at the surpassingly marvellous majesty of God. That light which was suffused

through the nebula reduces itself not only into the star but also into the glow-worm and the fire-fly, into the coal in the hearth and the light in the eye, even the warmth in the body. This *deeksha* is not only for the great, towering souls but also for the humblest soul. Just as the light of the infinite nebula can be reduced to the point of the glow-worm, so spiritual light can be focussed in the smallest being in creation. Such is the universal operation of *deeksha*. None is too humble for it. Let us drive out of our minds the mistaken notion that *deeksha* is only for select souls. The Holy Spirit of God comes to incarnate itself in the humblest of humble individuals. Nay, more: the lower animals faithfully following their instincts carry the principle of *deeksha* in them. Aye, it goes down to the vegetable kingdom as well. Behold, you cannot reverse the order of the parts of any flower. Again, at the right season, the fertilising pollen must be carried from one point to another. The *deeksha* of the pollen is: 'I must go and fertilise.' So, too, with inanimate objects. As Rabindranath has said, from the moment it forms itself in the Himalayan recesses, your Ganges says, 'I go to the ocean. That is my pilgrimage'. Obstacles never so huge may come in its way; but descend it must from height to height and from valley to valley. It cannot be satisfied till it has reached the ocean with the determination, 'I exist but to empty myself into the ocean. I have come from the ocean; and I go back to the ocean'. That is the *deeksha* of the river. It is unthinkable for the star, for the glow-worm, to hold out and say, 'I will not shine'.

Else, it goes out of the realm of nature; it is nowhere. Similarly, to every soul comes the tremendous call and command, 'My light you have received; and my light you shall shed forth'. Take the human heart. Suppose it said, 'I do not want to flow through the various blood-vessels'. The blood, then, would so overflow the heart as to bring on suspension. Hence the double obligation, 'I shall be receiving from God and also sending out into the world.' I cannot receive for myself and then go to sleep. No. If I am fit to receive, I must be prompt also to give.

So, my brother, in these few words, I wish to bring home the import of the great pledge you are now taking with and before God that you will henceforth set yourself up consciously as a focus-point of God's spirit. The difference between one who takes and one who does not take *deeksha* is that, while both are alike in God's own universe, parts of the Holy Spirit, he who takes *deeksha* knows he is living, moving and having his being in the embrace of this Spirit, and to him it becomes a personally realised rule of life to walk in the path of God. Both toil over the same task; both talk the same language; and both breathe the same atmosphere. But the task, the language and the atmosphere not inwoven with *deeksha* are lacking in one supreme element. After several experiments, a scientist said to his wife: 'Suppose some drops of oil, some grains of salt and some leaves of grass had, through a certain mysterious process of combination, come together and formed a salad. Would it not be delicious enough?' 'No,' she roundly

answered, 'not so much as I could make it'. Into the ordinary toil, speech and atmosphere of life is introduced the element of God-communion for the man of *deeksha*. He constantly asks himself, 'What does the Beloved of my heart do or say?' Socrates consulted his 'Demon' at every stage. With him, it is no longer the rule of his own like or dislike, the measure of his own taste or distaste; but the will of Him whose adoring, serving and self-surrendering one he has been. In every concern of life, however ordinary, the rule of conduct is — 'Am I doing it for the fear of God (that is only for slaves) or for the love of God (that is for sons)?' Hereafter, the first commandment of duty and enjoyment for you shall be : 'All the issues of my life shall be out of the love of God ; and all my activities shall flow into the love of God'. As even my faithless soul can conceive it, this is the rich meaning, the overwhelming significance, of *deeksha*. Realise it, then, so that what is drudgery to the person without *deeksha* shall become divine delight unto you. Yes ; verily, the sweeping of the house is the cleaning of a nook in the Temple of God where the Lord is enshrined in holiness. All duties and occupations shall be controlled and guided by this holy law — the love of God. May the Lord grant unto you the light of His spirit and the grace of His holiness to realise and make good in life the significance of this *deeksha* !

PRARDHANA

HYMN — *Rammu nahrudayammunu Pranesa gaiskommu* (Telugu)

Thou art the Lord, the acknowledged Lord, the espoused Lord, of the single self that each one of us calls himself or herself. And into this single self of the individual heart we receive Thee as its supreme Lord. Beside Thee, a second lord is simply unthinkable. This spiritual unchastity is simply atrocious. Thou alone art the Lord of all hearts; and we hail and welcome Thee into each single heart. As Thou takest Thy eternally due place of supreme Owner and Enjoyer, it is *swargam*, there is the heaven of heavens, for us. And as we find ourselves closeted in the heart with Thee and rejoicing with Thee, what is there that we lack? All, all, focus into Thee. The whole life with its countless purposes flows and converges into Thee. Grant us the grace to see Thee everywhere and everwhile in all the issues and outgoings of life. Senses and organs, powers and faculties, opportunities and facilities — all shall be dedicated unto Thee. Every minute shall be a witness to Thy holy power in and around us. So we would dedicate ourselves anew unto Thee and use and employ all our time and activities so that Thou shalt be the dominating Spirit and the fulfilling Goal of our lives. Grant this spiritual spousal-devotion to Thee that we be wholly Thine, as Thou art surely and joyously our all. Great God, this child of Thine and brother of ours — may he feel through every beat of the heart the vital impetus and the living throb of Thy Holy Spirit! Bless him and make his days the chronicles of Thy mercy and his time the sibyl scroll of Thy purpose. As we seek Thy blessing upon him, we implore it also on each one of us. May we

with heart and soul bless Thee for ever and ever as the
loved Lord, the beloved Spouse, of our hearts and
souls ! Blessed be Thy name now and for ever !

Om ! Brahma Kripah ! Kevalam !

Om ! Santhih ! Santhih ! Santhih !

Om ! Harih Om !

III
BIRTH-DAY FAMILY THANKSGIVING*
(1915)

UDBODHANA

With grateful and rejoicing hearts, we tender our thanks and salutations, we proffer our reverent and prostrate obeisances unto our Maker and Father, our Protector and Saviour. Our hearts full of gratitude and thankful rejoicings, we bring as an offering unto Him the Lord of all creation, unto Him the parent Source of all love, unto Him the tutelary Guardian of every soul, unto Him the Goal and Destiny of the entire universe. Blessed be His eternal name; blessed be His everlasting sovereignty; blessed be His transcendent glory; blessed be His unfathomable love; blessed be the irresistible might of His righteousness; blessed be His indescribable bliss and beatitude! We adore and praise, we cherish and chant, we acknowledge and glorify Him and His abundant bounties, His myriad mercies. Blessed be He that unto His children He bringeth the sovereignest comfort and joy, the supremest rapture and ecstasy, beyond all speculation and desire! Blessed be He that He vitalises the thoughts, invigorates the activities and perpetuates the generations of our race along the innumerable avenues

*At Pithapuram Palace, on the occasion of the fifth birthday of the Senior Rajah Kumar (25-10-'15).

of existence and outlook! Blessed be He that unto every homestead, high or humble, He sendeth the cheering message of His perpetual protection and His pervading kindness! And blessed be He that unto every soul He revealeth Himself as its constant Companion and ceaseless Indweller. We bless Him, we glorify Him, we rejoice in Him, as our Life, our Strength, our Wealth and our Joy.

DHANYAVADASAMARPANAMU and PRARDHANA

Our holy Lord, our dear and lovable One, Rejoicer of all hearts! We bow down before Thee and we render humble salutations unto Thee. The whole universe is ringing with Thy praise. This vast creation is laden with Thy glory in the joyous chants of the myriads of stars, in the untiring energy and the indefatigable vitality of the sun, in the rejuvenating cheer and the reviving hope born of the smile of every human being and reflected in the face of each of the untold objects with which teems the world. We bow to Thy mercy and we render our thanks unto Thee, the Lord of life—life emanating from, and sustained by, that love of Thine which informs the wonderful order, system and method of the whole universe and controls it with its numberless orbs, marvels of creation, through untold ages and aeons. Evermore imparting and figuring Thyself forth in this boundless universe and its rich tokens and indications of goodness and grace that everywhere surround and support them, with wise direction and indulgent forbearance, with sympathetic cooperation and unremitting

vigilance, Thou hast been sheltering, protecting, bracing up, developing and fulfilling each one of Thy children. Oh, merciful One, it is but a humble and feeble expression of our feeling hearts when we call Thee Father or Mother. How tender, how affectionate, how clement, how solicitous, how feelingly sympathetic, how vigilantly watchful, how interestedly concerned Thou art toward each one of us, designed by Thy matchless wisdom, descending from Thy supreme sovereignty, tended ever by Thine unfailing providence, educated of Thee with unending hope from stage to stage! Thus Thou makest Thyself the most watchful, the most tenderly and affectionately concerned Companion, Relation, Kindred, Parent and Protector of each one of us. Truly and verily, every little limb, organ and body is Thy own miracle of form and shape and growth wrought after the wondrous model of Thy own devising through every parent. That is the initial and inspiring miracle of life and love which, in such astounding multiplicity, Thou workest every minute of time, unknown to ourselves. Even before we were ushered by Thy providence into existence, the sphere of our life, movement and expansion was prepared, and made fit and proper, for us in advance; and all the elements and all the forces, the whole substance and the entire system, of the universe were so exquisitely adapted and rendered helpful unto each one of us that, even as we caught the first glimpse of light, the whole universe sang its welcome unto us. And every sense, every organ, is being greeted and invigorated, cheered and strengthened, by all its surroundings, as light precedes the eye,

sound anticipates the ear, smell and fragrance await the nostril, touch and taste become the precursors of the other related organs by that law of correlation of faculty and environment which Thou hast established for ever and ever in the constitution of one and all. That is the crowning mercy, that is the unspeakable blessing, which Thou hast designed throughout Thy cosmos. Nourishment awaiting organism; society welcoming the new addition; the whole world reared now into a house of protection, now into an arena of activity, now into an asylum of security, now into a temple of worship and once again into an abode of peace, behold, Thine own benevolence is spread out always and everywhere in this world of life with its universal possibilities, with its untold opportunities, with its exhaustless resources and with its momentous uses as Thou dost reveal them in every one of Thy children. Born dumb, provoked to speak; coming forth ignorant, drawn out into observation and perception; dropped down helpless, nourished into strength and self-reliance; ushered incomplete, led on to the fullest development and completion; intruders at first, finding welcome at once as guests; strangers, welcomed as partners — oh, how we feel Thy mercies borne in upon us even from the very day and hour of the beginning of our existence! How can we adequately realise Thy goodness besetting the life that Thou hast vouchsafed unto us? Thou art the Parent of all those that live — not the mere Author but the cherishing and protecting and prospering Father, the unfailing Inspirer and Companion, of all. We render our devoutest thanks unto Thee. Do Thou awaken in

us a full, an adequate sense of the worth, the value, the holiness, the heavenly significance, the immortal possibilities of our lives. Help us truly and verily to discern in the world Thine own provision for our growth and joy, our peace and progress. May we be surely and steadily trained, habituated, to feel how, as the Divine Mother, Thou lendest us every comfort and joy, leading us ever by the hand and cherishing us with all kindness! And may we thus learn to prize life itself as a gift, a blessing, of abundant love flowing ever untiringly from Thy heart and holy with the holiness of purpose, rich with the richness of expanding capacity and radiant with the glory of the destiny which Thou hast assigned unto it—even that of growth from weakness into unfailing strength, from time unto unending eternity! We beseech Thy blessing, that so we may surrender our whole lives as humble tributes of thankfulness and gratitude at Thy footstool and make them entirely Thine. Blessed, blessed, blessed be Thou!

Truly, who can praise Thee, who can tell the full story of Thy might and majesty, Thy goodness and love? Who can grasp and appreciate, define and describe Thee? Who can spell out the secret of Thy wisdom and compute the abundance of Thy manifestations? Who shall be able to say Thou art this or that? Thy creation is but a passing phase upon the surface of the limitless, bottomless vastness of Thy being. Thy wonderful designs, Thy marvellous purposes, Thy inscrutable foresight, Thy mysterious adaptations, Thy miraculous methods — what is man that

he should affect and presume to decipher and define them? Boundless beyond all space, lasting beyond all time, soaring beyond all imagination, energising beyond all conception, Thou art infinity itself — infinity in space, infinity in time, infinity in purpose, infinity in life and substance, infinity in essence and expression.

What is man — a passing mote wafted by the breath of existence — that He should seek to scan Thee and name Thee? Oh, do Thou, do Thou pardon the presumption and the impertinence of it. What are sages but those that have caught a glimpse of Thy light and, by Thy grace, become poised into the equilibrium of trust and repose in Thee? What are saints but those that have been permitted to touch the hem of Thy garment as Thou passest over the abyss of infinite time and eternal space and have been so sanctified into serenity of vision as to perceive Thy presence equally in the events of the past and in the prospects of the future?

What are philosophers but those that have been privileged to spell out the rudiments of Thy wisdom and been so impressed with its profundity as to be all humbleness before it? And what are all the votaries of beauty but those that have been rendered sensitive to a little twinkle of the radiance shining forth everywhere as the effulgence of Thy countenance and that, beholding it, do enjoy it with an ever-resistless impulse of rapture and ecstasy? Vast beyond all apprehension, profound beyond all measurement, absolute beyond all comparison, supreme beyond all rivalry, perfect beyond all imitation, Thou art Thyself alone, inimitable, incomparable, indescribable, absolutely one without a second. And yet, oh

God, like the little babe that cannot speak, like the tender nestling that has not learnt to distinguish between face and face, voice and voice, yet thrills with the touch of the mother, we are nurtured upon Thy bosom as the Mother of mothers—unable to grasp the plenitude of Thy greatness, even the wealth of Thy love, yet so nestled, so fostered, so nursed directly by Thee as to derive our whole substance and strength from Thee, the only Fountain of life. Blessed, blessed, blessed be Thou !

Thou art the perennial Source and the inexhaustible Store-house of all mercy. Thou art the God of every household and family. And here we are met to adore, to worship and to glorify Thee as the God of this household and this family. Thou art its presiding Genius, its ministering Angel. Thou art its cherishing and protecting Parent. Thou art its comforting and cheering Friend. Thou art its sustaining and supporting Strength. Thou art its saving and redeeming Lord. How short-lived is human memory and how treacherous is man's forgetful indifference that we should fail at all to remember Thy ever-present mercies! Oh, do Thou awaken in us this day in all its freshness and vigour a lively, intensified sense of Thy mercy in that the little seed Thy hand has sown has, under Thy fostering care, been reared into a soft and tender, graceful and lovable sapling, danger after danger by way of all possible interruptions being averted by the fulness of Thine own watchful care. Blessed, blessed, blessed be Thou!

How much wealth of possibility Thou dost put into every life here below, every one Thine own child and every child Thy very reflection, a copy, an expression, an illustration of Thyself ! Manifesting as it does unto us Thy ever-available, ever-watchful, ever-disinterested goodness, do Thou make this dear child dearer unto us as a gift direct from Thee to be cherished in increasing gratefulness. May our own imperfections never disturb its normal growth ; and may none of our own sorrows ever cast a shadow upon its onward path ! May all our efforts be fulfilled in its realisations and all our aspirations become its accomplished experiences ! May we ourselves walk in Thy ways amidst conscious, ceaseless association and fellowship with all children ! May it be given to us to realise our sacred responsibilities and, by Thy grace and through Thy suggestion, to live noble and worthy lives true to the traditions of this ancient House ! May Thy name be the bulwark and Thy service be the chief occupation of this family ; and may the entire precincts of this home be sanctified by the recognition and appreciation of the supreme, eternal principle that the soul of every man, howsoever high-placed, is surrounded by brothers all ! And thus, once more, may this darling become truly and verily Thy own gift, the merciful Mother's gift, unto us all ; and may every other member of the family receive the bounty of Thy gracious and all-sufficing light ! May the darling ones of all households prove fully to be the hope and the joy of their respective families ; and, thus, may future generations depend upon past ones in all climes so that from all quarters there shall go forth one hymn

of praise and thanksgiving unto Thee for ever and ever ! Blessed, blessed, blessed be Thy name ; and Thy blessedness be vouchsafed unto us all now and for ever !

Om ! Brahma Kripahi Kevalam !

Om ! Santhih ! Santhih ! Santhih !

Om ! Harih Om !

IV
MARRIAGE* SERVICE
(1931)

AVAHANA

Thou the God of all love, of all grace, of all holiness ! Immanent with Thy sacred presence, Thou art here on this auspicious and holy occasion, not as the far-off Creator, not as the distant Dictator, not as the general Supervisor, not even as the benevolent Purveyor, but as the indwelling Holy Spirit in every heart. Thou art present and profoundly real on this happy occasion. The very air we breathe, the light that passes into the eye, every kindly word, every gentle touch, every genial smile—all, all are full of, and fulfilled with, Thy goodness, love and grace. Thy presence is so clear, certain and vivid that the very word the tongue utters is of Thy shaping, the thought the mind conceives is of Thy forming, the prayer that comes forth from the soul is of Thy inspiring and the whole frame is athrill with the irrepressible joy of Thy living presence in and about, around and amidst us. We bless and glorify Thee as our God, our own dear God, the individual personal Deity of every one of us. This whole assemblage of well-wishers, friends and relations is all of Thy gathering, a token of Thy benediction, an expression

*Of Mr. Kowta Satyanarayana, M. A., and Sreemati Satyavati (eldest daughter of Mr. P. Rama Swamy, M. A.) at Cocanada (15-10-'31).

of Thy affection. For this we render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee. From time beyond measure, far off in the past we knew not of, Thou didst, in the benignity of Thy parental solicitude, design the union of these beloved ones. Not of our planning and devising, not of their own individual choosing, but prompted and urged by Thy Holy Spirit, even as Thou hast ordained it, this wedding, we feel, is to be celebrated on this happy occasion. We need not beseech Thy blessing already forestalled and showered upon us. Fill us with the devoutness of heart and the thankfulness of soul to feel that Thy blessing in infinite measure is being vouchsafed; and grant that, feeling sure of that blessing and grateful throughout that it is under the inspiration of Thy spirit that this thrice-happy ceremony is to be performed, we may go through it as but humble instruments and chosen servants of Thy purpose. It is a sacrament made sacred this moment by Thy Spirit, and an occasion to be rendered fruitful for the future by Thy blessing. Filled with this holy consciousness of Thy blessing, we seek to do Thy will in the union of these souls. Blessed be Thy name and Thy blessing rest on these children and all present here!

(To the Congregation—)

My sisters and brothers,

The father of the Bride has already besought, and in my humble and respectful way I seek to add to that request, that you join with one heart and soul in invoking God's blessing and sending out your benedictions

on this occasion. Each one of us may feel assuredly blessed as he or she joins in this supplication of grace and communication of benediction. We are purified, enriched, gladdened and blessed as we participate in this sacrament. So let us join in it with sacred, God-illuminated hearts of devotion. Blessed be His name now and for ever !

(To the Bridegroom's maternal uncle —)

My friend,

I understand that, with faith and trust in God and with hope for the future happiness of these dear ones, you have been good enough to come to allow this, your dear nephew, to enter into this bond of wedlock. I request you will bless him and, in token of your benediction, garland him.

(The Bridegroom is garlanded by his uncle)

(To the Bride's parents—)

My beloved ones,

In the world's talk of the body, I am a stranger. In God's language of the spirit, I am of the family. With a heart suffused with thankfulness and joy, I am here not only to conduct, but to participate in, the ceremony. You two, as the immediate agents of the All-holy One, have brought up this child through many a prayerful year. And now is come the touching time, the melting moment, when the child will have to be transferred into the arms of another life-long protector. Feeling the immense solemnity of it, do

you with prayerful hearts bless and garland her.

(The Bride is garlanded by her parents)

(To the Congregation—)

They that are parents or *in loco parentis* have signified their assent and given their blessing. Now, as the next step, we shall assure ourselves, with God as its Eternal Witness, of the mutual willingness and reciprocal affection of these dear ones.

VARANAMU

(To the Bridegroom—)

My friend,

Have you, with trust in God's goodness and with a prayerful supplication for His blessing, come to be wedded to this dear one on this occasion ?

(Bridegroom — 'Yes')

(To the Bride—)

My darling,

Have you, through Gods own ordaining and with the blessing of your parents and with the full hope and confidence that you will go from one sweet home to another sweeter home, come to render yourself as the life-long companion unto this dear one ?

(Bride — 'Yes')

(To the Congregation—)

They have said 'Yes'. May God say 'Amen' to that 'Yes' ! After all, not the word of man but the inspiration of God is to be the witness on this occasion. I believe, and beseech you to share in the belief, that the solemn, weighty word, 'Yes', that has come from each heart may be enriched with your affirmative blessing. May He, in His infinite mercy now and through endless years, make this 'Yes' the dawn of a glorious day in their lives !

PANIGRAHANAMU

(The Minister joins the right hands of the Bride and the Bridegroom and, holding them in his hands, says to the Couple—)

My children,

Believe with all the sincerity of your spirits that, as I hold your united hands in my humble hand, I am only the feeble, futile, faltering agent God in His infinite mercy has chosen thus to proclaim the union of hearts through the outward symbol of the union of hands. This union of hands means that from one heart there goes forth to the other heart a perpetual current of love and self-surrender. Believe with all faith that no one can ever separate you, thus united. You are now indissolubly intermingled with each other in heart and soul. Now, pronounce unto each other the vow of life-long dedication.

(The Bridegroom repeats after the Minister : I, Kowta Satyanarayana, with prayerful trust in God and with whole-hearted love for you, do of my own free choice elect you, Sreemati Satyavati, as my soul's companion throughout life and request you, with God as the Witness and in the presence and with the testimony of this large assembly, to become and be the dear, life-long queen of my heart.)

(The Bride next repeats after the Minister: With trust in God and with whole-hearted love for, and devotion to, you, I, Satyavati, request you, Sreeman Kowta Satyanarayana garu, to become and to be for life and through eternity the lord of my heart, the sole monopoliser of all my affection and devotion, that thus I might fulfil my life in helping to fulfil yours. Be my soul's inseparable companion, co-pilgrim and partner with God as the Witness and these elders as the testifiers. Do you ever reign in my heart as my honoured husband and lord.)

(The Bride and the Bridegroom together repeat after the Minister : As we have made this solemn, self-dedicating pledge in Thy presence, oh Thou Holy One, do Thou in Thy boundless mercy pronounce Thy blessing on it. Unify our hearts and so shape our days and guide our lives that hereafter, like two streams mingling into one current, we might flow on together into the ocean of Thy mercy, glorifying Thee and serving humanity with mind, heart and soul. Be Thou our Guide and Strength, Path-finder and Companion, Goal and Destiny. Blessed be Thy name now and for ever !)

ANGULEEYAPRATHIGRAHANAMU

(Bride to the Bridegroom after the Minister—)

In token of my lifelong devotion to you and as proof that I have by God's grace this day received you as my beloved and honoured husband for ever, I place this ring upon your dear finger. May it be there as the token and proof that my heart shall thus encircle yours all the days of my life! May you wear it worthily and happily for all the years of your life! May it be, wherever you are, a reminder unto you that I am near your heart!

(Bridegroom to the Bride after the Minister —)

Beloved, in token of my lifelong devotion to you and in proof of my happy acquisition of you as my partner in life for all the years to come, I place this ring upon your tender and charming finger. May it be a token and proof that, as it encircles your finger, my love for ever encircles your heart! In all the years to come, may you by God's grace wear it so as to shed upon it all the beauty and fragrance of a chaste, devoted and loving life! May God ever keep it on your finger as a token of my devotion; and wherever you are, may it be a proof that in my heart I am always with you! Blessed be the name of God even for this mark of mutual self-dedication and self-realisation!

SOOTHRADHARANA

Unto all Hindu hearts and souls, this *soothram* is a token full of the rich significance of purity and

prosperity, devotion and self-sacrifice. To the outward eye, this is tied around the neck ; but according to the inward spirit, it is located next to the heart so that it may rest nearest to the heart and that to the wedded union now established there can be no break, no separation. In the spirit of God — not in the weakness of the flesh but in the strength of the soul, marriage once performed is performed for ever ; and divorce is an aberration not to be tolerated.

(To the Bridegroom—)

In the name of the God of all grace, you will fasten this *soothram*, not, as the world says, around the neck but near the heart of your beloved one.

MALIKAPRATHIGRAHANAMU.

PRARDHANA

Thou all-holy One ! Thou art the Maker of all true marriages. The proper union of hearts and souls is of Thy establishing. The setting up of homes is of Thy providential doing. The dedication of lives unto the service of men that Thou mayst be glorified is all out of Thy eternal purpose. Vows countless have been made in this same spirit from time immemorial. Man makes the vow ; God sustains the pledge. Man cherishes the desire : God fulfils the prayer. Thus all vows proceed from the holy inspiration that Thou impartest. All vows can be kept through the sacred strength that Thy grace alone vouchsafeth. And all vows can bear fruit in love and goodness only as the showers of Thy

grace enter into the hearts making those vows. Thus, all emanates from Thee ; all abides in Thee ; and all perfects itself in Thee. Thou art the beginning, the centre and the completion of every noble resolve and purpose. Unto Thee by eternal right is due all the glory for the fulfilment of all holy vows. May the vow now so devoutly taken be by Thy grace so amply and abundantly fulfilled in the lives of these dear ones that it shall prove a rich benediction unto untold children of Thine through the process of countless years ! Bless them ; bless us unto whom has been given the joy of witnessing this auspicious union ; and be Thou for ever blessed in our praise and thanksgiving. Blessed be Thy name now and for ever !

SAPTHAPADI

Beloved ones,

According to the tradition of our Hindu custom, it is usual for the newly-wedded couple to take seven steps together side by side. You may not literally in physical form do according to this usage. But remember, at all events, you will have to move together, heart united to heart, soul wedded to soul, and foot keeping time to foot, along the pilgrimage of life. For you, henceforth, the *Sapthapadi* in spirit shall represent seven sacred, seven inviolable obligations. The first obligation is the obligation to be devoted to Truth, *Satyam*. The second obligation is that all your days shall be dedicated to Duty, *Dharmam*. When you are thus united in the worship of Truth and the discharge of Duty, you will

be associated, in the third obligation, with all who call you their kith and kin; and that shall entail upon you your *Grihakrityam*. The fourth responsibility shall be that of cordial hospitality, in the name of *Athidhipuja*, unto all whom Providence sends to your home and hearth as honoured guests. The fifth shall be that of devoting all thought and energy in a judicious spirit to the welfare of the Land of your birth, your *Mathrubhoomi*. The sixth shall be that of embracing all in the arms of Social Service, *Manavaseva*. And crowning all shall come the seventh supreme obligation of complete self-surrender unto the one only God, *Daivabhakti*. These are reposed on your united shoulders. So shall you walk together every day hereafter unto the glory of God, the welfare of humanity and your own salvation.

ANTHYAPRARDHANA and ASEESH

Thou the companioning God, the leading God, the eternal Destiny of souls! These, thus united, cast themselves upon Thy grace and render themselves into Thy protection. They invoke Thy grace upon the pledge that they would fulfil. Vouchsafe unto them all the blessings of wedded life in the growth of family and in the service of kith and kin, of the community and of humanity. The home set up this day as the sanctuary of Thy Holy Spirit where peace may reign, prosperity grow, truth thrive, goodness go forth and love be given and received as man's true destiny — may it find abundant growth and ample

fulfilment in their lives! Blessed, blessed be Thy name
now and for ever!

Om ! Brahma Kripahi Kevalam !

Om ! Santhih ! Santhih ! Santhih !

Om ! Harih Om !

V
FAMILY SERVICE*
(1916)

UDBODHANA

Praised and adored from the bottom of our hearts be the dear and holy name of the Supreme, the Perfect God ! Glory be unto His name ; hallowed and adored for ever be His holy, saving, protecting and beloved spirit ! Not content with answering our needs and meeting our wants, not satisfied with bestowing careful watch upon us, again and again He draws us into direct and loving communion with Himself. He is not merely the first Author, the far-off Protector, the ruling Sovereign, the august Law-giver, the wise Ordainer of destiny ; but He is our own Father, honoured Father, beloved Father, revered Father, adored Father, ever-vigilant Father, ever-to-be trusted Father. Blessed be His name ! We owe it wholly unto Him that, with confidence in spite of our unworthinesses, with freedom in spite of our many grievous errors, with joyousness in spite of our constant weakness and even rebelliousness, we are permitted to approach Him, make up to Him, and embrace Him, directly reaching forth our arms. We owe it to His grace, His mercy, that, thus made prompt and bold, free and hopeful, we can adore Him and derive strength and wisdom, purity and goodness,

* In Pithapuram Palace (27-2-'16).

love and righteousness from Him. This hope, this trust, this confidence is entirely His gift, wholly the grant of His grace. Blessed be His name !

ARADHANA, PRARDHANA and ASEESH

Thou art our own, ever available, ever near, ever kind God. Out of the fulness of our hearts, we feel the measurelessness of Thy mercy, as we realise alike its vitality and its spontaneity. Thou art our informing experience ; Thou art our trust and assurance as to truth and love ; Thou art the spring of our varied activities tending to real happiness. All that is implied and enfolded in love is from Thee, directly out of Thy very bosom of love. How dare we stray far from Thee, remain indifferent to Thee, distrustful towards Thee ? We need to come close to Thee and find our hope and joy, our strength and the very basis of our existence in contact with Thee.

So, more and more would we feel Thee as the seed and substance, the strength and the very vital reality of life. Thou art the *Satyam* in all the variegated details of the permanent behind and amid the passing. Thine is the supremacy, the glory, within and without the fabric of the universe, as Thou alone art its ever-controlling and regulating destiny. Thou art the eternal Truth : matter is but the manifestation of Thy sustained and enduring power and but the definition of Thy homogeneous and eternal purpose. The whole universe is filled with the living evidence of, and the

convincing testimony to, Thy all-developing, all-harmonising, all-governing, all-swaying, all-shaping, all-blessing purposes and processes. Blessed be Thy name !

The very pulsation of life within our hearts, the germination of energy in every fibre of our bodies, the quickening activity and the sustained continuity of our faculties and powers, the valid reports of our senses, the trusted impressions of our organs—all these are from Thee; they derive their worth and sanction from Thee; and they depend for their sustenance and their fulfilment entirely upon Thee. As Thy true temples, we literally feel our bodies to be indwelt, informed and inspired of Thee. May we ever, more and more, realise their holiness! May we ever be charmed and exalted by the sense of sanctifying relationship with Thee; and may we realise the prestige and prerogative of Thy children rejoicing in Thee and glorifying Thee as their Father and Saviour! Blessed, blessed, blessed be Thy name!

HYMN—*Anandavarinidhi* (Telugu)

Thou Lord of our hearts! Even as we have sung, we would ever cling to Thee, we would ever abide with Thee, we would ever desire and seek to be inseparably associated with Thee, completely render and surrender ourselves unto Thee, as the faithful wife in self-forgetfulness, finds her fullest self-realisation in and with her spouse. Thou art the Lord of our hearts by virtue of Thy sovereign, supreme, sacred right as their Owner

and Possessor, their Charmer, Monopoliser and Saviour. May we thereby seek communion, hold communion, enjoy communion with Thee, in everlasting surrender of all we hold dear unto ourselves, with the loving fidelity and devotion of the faithful wife unto her husband! Adored Lord, do Thou for ever remain the only adored God of our trust, of our reverence, of our beatitude. May we render every service ordained of Thee as unto Thy glory! All our relations and all our efforts and endeavours—may they be such as to reflect glory upon, and bring honour unto, Thee, our holy Lord! Our lives—may they be one song of praise and glory unto our Lord's everlasting sovereignty and supremacy! Our homes—may they be only the outer courts of the Temple of our Lord! Our thoughts—may they be inspired by, and informed with, the one supreme thought of faith in our Lord! Our hearts—may they be but fragments of our Lord's universal heart of love! Our souls—may they be the seats of righteousness whence our Lord issues His mandates and benefactions of truth, wisdom and goodness! May our whole lives be thus dedicated to Thee, seeking no other end and coveting no other bliss than that of glorifying Thee, of being more and more loving to Thee and of rejoicing more and more in Thee! May we thus be glorified as servants of the adored Lord of all! And thus do Thou in our own being be the one Sovereign of our adoring souls now and for ever. Blessed be Thy name; blessed be Thy name!

HYMN—*Manaka daya gavave thandri* (Telugu)

We come to Thee as Thy devotees to participate in, to rejoice in, to experience our ecstasy and our rapture in, Thee. May we behold the beauty of Thy providence and Thy charming self-exposition in this universe with the glow of every dawn and through all the transcendent hours of every day! May we be participators of Thy nature and feel the rapture of love in its richness and its variety in the sweetness of all household relations, awakening fresh hope in us and quickening us with the inspiration of new ideals! What is this earth, this world, but the expression of the holy song of Thy grace and Thy goodness? As Thy worshipping devotees, may we entirely and completely surrender ourselves unto Thee, not with the fear of helplessness, not with the computation of profit, but even with the surety of beholding our highest and most enrapturing bliss in Thee, our All-in-all, our all-sufficing Destiny! May we thus be, all our days, possessed with the thought and feel the joy of Thy love and glory in it! Blessed be Thy name; blessed be Thy name!

We invoke Thy blessing to enrich and adorn this household. Do Thou, in Thy mercy, cherish every member of this family and inspire one and all in it to use ever for Thy glory the opportunities, resources and facilities Thou alone hast vouchsafed unto them. May they be ever loyally and faithfully devoted to Thee as the tender nurslings, the growing hopes, the standing joys of the family! May they be for ever touched and blessed and inspired and sanctified by Thy love and Thy mercy, Thy purity and Thy wisdom!

May they be evermore under Thy eye, their minds growing rich with truth and radiant with devotion! And may this home be sanctified with the holy purpose of subserving Thy will! May it be ever a shrine for the adoration of Thee, blessed with the richest blessings of Thy mercy and Thy grace! We solicit Thy blessing, likewise, upon all the other dear children that are gathered here. Do Thou invigorate their minds; do Thou sanctify their hearts; do Thou put in them the sense of duty and the habit of feeling themselves blessed in Thy mercy and in Thy glory; do Thou for ever and ever grant them the privilege of life in worshipping Thee and being wholly dedicated unto Thee in praise and prayer, in love and service.

Thou the supreme Master and the holy Saviour of the universe, may Thy name be chanted by all lips and in all lives ever and everywhere, in all climes and in all homes! Thy truth triumph, Thy love reign supreme, Thy kingdom be established for ever and ever! Blessed, blessed, blessed be Thy name; and Thy children be blessed all in Thee! Glory, glory, glory unto Thee for ever and ever!

Om ! Ekamevadwitheeyam Brahma !

Om ! Brahma Kripahi Kevalam !

Om ! Santhih ! Santhih ! Santhih !

Om ! Harih Om !

vi
SERVICE
With Sermon on
THE FREEDOM OF THE SPIRIT
(193)

—
· UDBODHANA

HYMN — *Anandamrithanamah* (Sanskrit)

Anandam ; ecstatic bliss ; rapturous enjoyment ; transporting happiness — it is this that, even in His infinite mercy and boundless love, He vouchsafes unto us on this supremely joyful occasion of worshipping together our All-in-all. He giveth unto us His abounding gifts and graces that go beyond all reckoning. From every beat of the heart to every gospel of truth, all are but His gifts—the bounties of His love. But above and beyond His donation of all these countless gifts, His sanctity solemnises them all with the gift of worship, of communion with His self as our All-in-all. The entire universe with its limitless expanses and existences is continuously embracing this act of worship, attuned to the sole chant of the Divine glory. Not empty words, not mere hopes, not a bare logical probability, but the certainty of vivid, inward, personal experience is this act of worship. Nearness unto Him, nearer than ourselves unto ourselves, is thus due to Him, who is the vital, central Spring of our very being, experience and enjoyment. As our confidence

has been realised time and again, to worship Him is really to feel that we are of His substance, begotten of His holy self. This dear God is truly and verily *Ananda-brahma*. As the seers of all ages have declared with the vision of the soul's eye, His self-donating bliss, His love-expressing joy or whatever we call it — it is out of His *anandam* the universe is come, it is towards His *anandam* the universe is tending, and it is in His *anandam* the universe is being fulfilled. It is this God of *anandam* that has vouchsafed Himself unto us even through eternal grace. And now the whole pulse of life beats quickened by the pleasure and joy of His worship. How merciful He is! He, the supreme Sovereign of the universe in His measureless, limitless grandeur, not only permits us to reach Him but also receives us with open arms of love and warm greetings of grace. With these He comes to us and gathers us in His paternal embrace. How can we fail to render our response to His embrace? Let us give ourselves up unto Him in adoration and worship Him jointly and unitedly as one family. May He vouchsafe this supreme bliss unto us!

ARADHANA

Om ! Sathyam Jnanamanantham Brahma Ananda-roopamamritham Yadvibhathi Santham Sivamadwaitam Suddhamapapaviddham !

Thou art *Sathyam*, Truth, Reality, the entire Substance, the whole Essence of things. Thou art the Truth that imparts reality to every object and incident. What

the scientist discovers, what the seer visions, what the prophet predicts, what the sage realises, what the saint reflects — that is but the manifold embodiment of Thy one Truth. Images are but the modes of Thy Truth. Life is but an expression of Thy Truth. Thou art the Truth that gives a noble purpose unto every life in the whole creation. We bow before Thee.

Thou art *Jnanam*, Wisdom—not merely the Wise One but Wisdom itself, the central Sun of all knowledge and intelligence. Even as the sun is the physical centre of this universe, Thou art the Centre, the Sun, of Wisdom — that insight which pierces to unity amid all variety and underneath all profundity. Thou art that Wisdom which makes every purpose of man a tributary to Thy own end as the final Goal of all. Thou art the Wisdom that shapes the destinies of all. Thou art the Wisdom by glimpsing which the profane ones of the world become its light-bearers. Thou art the Wisdom which speaks in divers tones of comprehensive truth. Thou art the Wisdom which moves large in the movement of the orbs above. We glorify Thee.

Thou art *Anantham*, the Infinite, the Minute One indivisibly minute, the Grand One surpassing the grand. Who can measure Thy Height; who can comprehend Thy Vastness? Truly and literally, we live, move and have our being in Thy infinitude. Thou art the all-pervading yet all-transcending Infinite. Thou art within and without. Imagination is baffled, longing is rendered void and the heart becomes helpless in striving to reach Thee in Thy depths. Yet, even in

the possibility of infinitude in ourselves, we discover Thee as *anantham* in Truth, *anantham* in Wisdom, *anantham* in Joy, *anantham* in Peace, *anantham* in Love, *anantham* in Holiness. We magnify Thy name.

As Thou ever livest in Thyself as *Sathyam*, *Jnanam* and *Anantham*, Thou seekest to manifest Thyself as *Anandam*, *Amritham*, *Santham*, *Sivam*, *Suddham*. Thou art *Anandaroopamamritham*, the very Embodiment of Bliss and Immortality. From the beat of the heart to the dance of the myriads of orbs, there is Thy *anundam*. At the centre of the universe, there is the chant of Thy *anandam*. Cradled in *anandam*, fostered in *anandam*, nurtured in *anandam*, grown in *anandam*, developed in *anandam*, blessed in *anandam*, the whole universe is the child of *Anandam*. Even as Thou hast brought forth the universe out of *anandam*, Thou hast imparted to it the vitality of *amritham*. Man brought into being through untold stages, Thou makest to rise even to the glory of God in *amritham*. What Thou lovest, Thou designest for the evermore, thus proving Thyself as *Anandam* and *Amritham* in one. We bless Thee.

As Thou wouldst achieve Thy purpose in the life immortal, Thou pourest the benediction of unity, of *adwaiitham*, upon the one and the many, the within and the without, the here and the hereafter. We praise Thee as the One only without a second.

Thou art *Santham*, Peace, the Peace that passeth all understanding, the Peace which the world cannot

give or take away. Thou art the Peace of self-contained serenity, of all-conquering security, of all-subsuming sufficiency. Glory be unto Thee !

Thou art *Sivam*, Goodness, Mercy, Clemency, Compassion, Grace. The love which lives by being the very truth of the beloved is alone realised in Thyself. Unto the endearing one, Thou art the Mother. Unto the humble love of the devotee, Thou art the Reality Infinite. We throw ourselves upon Thee.

Thou art *Suddham*, Sanctity, Purity itself, Righteousness and Holiness itself. As death daunts not the immortal, sin dares not to approach the immaculate. Here we are, gathered in Thy embrace as children of the All-holy. Blessed, blessed be Thy name now and for ever !

Even as Thou art unto us the heart's adored One for our joy and sanctification, we approach Thee as the God of Truth and Wisdom, of Harmony and Good-will, and as comprising and embracing us all in Thyself—each one with a special place in Thee and a personal benediction from Thee. Vouchsafe unto us the blessing of sweet and holy communion with Thee.

GOSHTIPRARDHANA

*Asathoma sadgamaya ; thamasoma jyothirgamaya ;
mrithyormamrithamgamaya ; Aviraveermayedhirudra
yatthey dakshinam mukham thena mampahi nithyam.*

Across the ocean of existence in this world, Thou art the Pilot ; and we beseech shelter in Thee and

guidance from Thee. As, child-like, we grasp Thy hand and absolutely and unconditionally render ourselves unto Thy care, we implore Thee, lead us out of untruth into truth, out of darkness into light and from death into immortality. Thou all-inspiring One, do Thou, with Thy benignant smile, impart Thyself unto us and make us wholly Thine in truth, in love, in service and in joy that we may live all our days and dedicate our powers unto Thy glory. *Om ! Thathsath !*

UPADESAMU

On this occasion, I desire to speak upon a subject which may be said to be in a certain real sense quite familiar and clear to every member of the Brahma Samaj but which yet it will be good for us to recall and redwell upon time and again, namely, the subject of the fundamental concept of Rajah Rammohun Roy as he originated the Brahma Samaj. In the issue of *The Modern Review* for the current month, there are two articles on the purpose, outlook and insight of the Rajah, one by no less a person than Dr. Rabindranath Tagore and the other by a writer who has evidently made a minute study of the theme. For the present, our immediate object will be to realise, by reminding ourselves of, the basis on which Rajah Rammohun Roy constructed and consecrated our Church. As those who have made a close study of his life and letters are perfectly aware, there was one continuity of conviction behind all his labours. Comparatively early in life and throughout later life, he maintained this continuity

and stressed it in three propositions. The first of those propositions is that man is intended to be a free being, freedom itself being meant for him. The second is that this freedom is to be employed for, and, in fact, enjoyed and realised through, perpetual progress; for if freedom has any object, purpose and justification, it must be found in constant progress. And the third and last is that this freedom, exercising and expressing itself through ceaseless progress, should strive to achieve unity. These three conditions, then, must go together to make one complete coordination. Rajah Rammohun Roy held that freedom ceases to be freedom and loses its vital strength and grace unless it is pledged and wedded to progress; and that it is not to be, as we often fancy it to be, restricted to bodily movements, social engagements or political rights alone. All these are merely corollaries and sequels to the fundamental principle of the freedom of the spirit. The soul has been designed to be free, just as the sun has been designed to shine forth. The spirit so designed and chartered by God to be free abhors every interference with its freedom, just as the sun abhors all darkness. And the free spirit makes everything around it free, just as the sun makes the dark and the opaque bright. Accordingly, as the basic and the sustaining foundation of Rajah Rammohun Roy's conviction, we have the axiomatic assertion of the freedom of the soul to approach God. Man is not merely an automatic machine, not merely a composite of the senses, not even an intellectual apparatus, but essentially a spiritual being with intimate affinities with God

as Spirit. In all ages and in all communities since the dawn of human history, it has invariably been man's aim to be linked on to something other than and higher than himself. Therefore, the first, the original, the paramount expression of freedom is his right to approach God. We may talk of ever so many intermediaries; but that cannot touch the basic, axiomatic truth of man's direct access to God. Sree Sankaracharya, in a well-known saying, observed that as the magnet and the needle must be pulling towards each other, so, too, the human soul must reach out for the Reality. Neither is there any infallible gospel at all apart from God. All gospels are ever from Him. Good men, be they here or there, are, God be thanked, only sure and certain expressions of the same Divine nature. As unto the voyager every star is a path-finder, so unto the soul every good man is a path-finder. But, for freedom we must go to God alone. Companions He has granted unto us; but substitutes for Himself He has forbidden. Hence the essence of the whole thing is the freedom of access to God. And as this freedom is given, it is given as a gift. It is to be used for progress, more and still more progress, even as Goethe is said to have called for 'Light, more light.' With every step higher and higher, this all-comprehensive progress comes to be not merely going ahead but bringing within its bounds richer and richer interests. For, it is impossible for any one to go ahead without extending the range of his vision. Progress means not only progress in extent but progress in wider, richer and ampler interests. Freedom is like the healthy bird that takes larger and

larger circles. What is uninteresting to me today ought to become interesting tomorrow. One who is a stranger today ought to be a comrade tomorrow. What I call family today ought to extend to society tomorrow. And what I call society today ought to be broadened in its range until I am able to say, *Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*. This is what is meant by spiritual progress. Progress in other directions narrows itself, whereas spiritual progress becomes more and more comprehensive with a unity and continuity of purpose in broadening and expanding the human faculties. Then alone do you get a correct view of a thing when you view it from the stand-point of eternity. The progress of the spirit is not like the movement of an automobile but like the expansion of a river. Speaking of the ocean-rivers of South America, Sir Walter Scott in his poem observes how we are unable to say which is the river and which the ocean. By such expansion towards the Supreme One, the *atman* grows into a reflection of the *Paramatman*. Thus freedom is to realise the great Unity. As Maeterlinck with so many seers before him reminds us, the ultimate Truth is One and that is Spirit. Born a Hindu with the Hindu tradition and the Hindu spirit in him and at the same time starting with the freedom of every worshipper to hunger and thirst after God, Rajah Rammohun Roy asked himself, 'What is the essence of Hinduism?'; and then he got at the vital seed. Did it say, 'You shall have the object of your quest only on condition that you encase it within particular limits?' No, as he proceeded forth on his pilgrimage of Truth, he found within himself

an impulse to grow further, to grow ampler. As Dr. Tagore points out, here was the daring spirit of Rammohun Roy. While the previous sages had said 'India and Hinduism,' he was so daring as to declare that *there* is a thing for the whole world, even because the world has it already. Go to the centre of every historical religion; and you light upon the One without a second, all-including and all-unifying. Thus, there was in Rammohun a native disposition to grow and grow. He was vibrating with the central conviction, 'Ours is a universal religion' — not a mere made-up mixture of all religions but the realisation of the supreme truth that One Divine Spirit permeates the whole universe and that, as our own Brahmananda Keshub Chandra Sen put it afterwards, the Spirit speaks through the native vernacular of every heart. It is this all-hovering, all-inspiring, all-illuminating Spirit that is the source and the sanction, the substance and the security of the gospel of Unity. There is no sage to be outlawed; because it is the sages that make the whole history of man, not merely by the march of law and order, but by the miracle of love and grace. All gospels, as Emerson teaches us, are but the burden of the one Bible of the race that has rolled out from the heart of Nature. In this sense, freedom is free only so far as to be self dedicated to progress within, progress around and progress abroad, and to enjoy and realise that progress in the all-harmonising unity of the Spirit. This, then, is the message of Rajah Rammohun Roy; and this we have to live and act up to.

ASEESH

May He, the Lord of the Dispensation of the Spirit, vouchsafe unto us, as He alone can in His abounding grace, the faith and the trust, the purposiveness and the prayerfulness, the strength and the guidance we so sorely need daily and hourly and momentarily to live in the light of His revelation !

Om ! Brahma Kṛipahi Kevalam !

Om ! Santhih ! Santhih ! Santhih !

Om ! Harih Om !

PRAYERS
AND
MEDITATIONS

I
THE NAME OF THE LORD*
(1925)

Thou the Nameless One of countless names! Thy name, Thy supreme name, Thy sacred name, Thy inspiring name, Thy sanctifying name, Thy all-sufficing name, we chant, praise and glorify on this occasion. Before Thy sovereign name writ large and deep over the whole universe and in all creation—Thy own marvellous, matchless name, we bow down with reverence on this occasion. Sweet in the heart, sublime in the spirit, smiling on the lip of love, tuneful upon the tongue of devotion, soothing to the forehead of anxiety, searching through the soul of sin, comforting to the heart of remorse, blissful to the head lowly with the submission of penitence, serene in the look of the sage, calm in the repose of the faithful, shining in every star, fragrant in every flower, resonant in every grove, mirrored over every stream, majestic in every mountain, widespread as the whole universe, differentiated yet harmonised in the story of the nations, Thy name is the charm, the spell, the talisman that alike sustains, cheers and blesses every one of Thy children; and unto that name we render our devoutest obeisances on this occasion. Unto this lowly, sin-stricken, sorrow-laden soul Thy name comes as the balm, the very pulse, of hope; and unto it he bears his humble,

*Closing prayer after *Ushakeerthan* at Pithapuram on Sixty-third Birthday (26-9-'25).

his grateful testimony. The marvellous virtues of Thy name, who knows in full but the sinning heart? How unto it comes home Thy holy name in the lonely hour of desertion, in the anguishing hour of sorrow, in the tormenting hour of remorse, in the rejoicing hour of fellowship, in the solemn hour of worship, in the sanctifying hour of self-surrender — how it comes home with all its pregnant meaning and all its brimful solemnity! Thy name — what a thrice-hallowed *mantra* to be chanted, contemplated, glorified and accepted for ever even as the one guiding light of life!

And as these — Thy dear, dear children and my own beloved, honoured brethren — have gathered around this frail, fragile creature, Thy own goodness manifests and expresses itself now and here even in the face of all his frailties and weaknesses. What but Thy holy name and its impulse has drawn them together? Thou hast gathered them together with the chorus of Thy name upon their lips; and even with that sacred bond Thou knittest all our hearts together. It is Thy name that assumes divers forms and myriad meanings as experiences severally come to us in the bitters and sweets of life — the bitters Thy tonic and the sweets Thy relish but all, all, alike the dispensations of Thy mercy presenting itself in manifold varieties of ways. Hallowed be Thy name! We praise Thee and glorify Thee as the sole Bearer of the holiest of names. And we render thanks unto Thee for all Thou hast vouchsafed unto us — even unto this humble, insignificant being in Thy creation.

Oh, how to name Thee? But why name Thee? Doth it not suffice to say, 'Thou the Nameless One, the Ever-named One'? Thy name, Thy name — be it glorified even thus evermore! For, as we glorify Thy name, the whole world rejoices and emerges forth into a new manifestation. In the chant of Thy name, there is the sunshine of hope, there is the serenity of trust, there is the rapture of devotion, there is the impulse of service. Thy holy name be sung again and again not only as I enter upon, but while I proceed along, the course of the new year now opening out! With all my sins and shortcomings, all my frailties and iniquities, I would chant Thy name as one among Thy own children and pilgrims. So, step after step, let it be Thy chant that shall go ahead of me and lead me, go with me and behind me in the fellowship of the whole fraternity of these, Thy children. And as we tread Thy path of truth, goodness and righteousness, may Thy holy name be ever with us, whispered in the inmost recesses of our hearts and resounding in the universal chorus of creation everywhere! May the new year be a season entirely inspired by Thy holy name and completely dedicated to it! Do Thou make it the mainstay and the sole guide of one and all in the whole universe. So would we praise Thee and render ourselves unto Thee in devout glorification of Thy supreme name. Blessed, blessed, blessed be Thou and Thy name now and for ever!

Om! Brahma Kripah! Kevalam!

Om! Santhih! Santhih! Santhih!

Om! Harih Om!

ii
BHAGAVAN — DAYANIDHI*
(1934)

HYMN—*Jayaviswapitha Bhagavan Dayanidhi* (Bengali)

Om ! Bhagavan ! Dayanidhi ! Unto Thee, the *Bhagavan*, the Omnipresent and the Omnibenevolent One, unto Thee, my humble and penitent yet trustful obeisances and salutations on this solemn, this reassuring day !

Thou art *Bhagavan*, the incoming, the all-pervading, the ever-companioning God. And Thou art *Dayanidhi*, the Mine inexhaustible of goodness. Thus it is the supreme expression of Thy goodness that Thou dost, in Thine inexhaustible love, come over from the *Brahman* into the *Bhagavan*, from the Transcending into the Pervading ; and thus we spring into being and grow up loving. It is all Thine own grace ; and I render my humble and devout thanks unto Thee for this self-revelation of Thyself. And Thou art *Dayanidhi*, the interminable Fount of goodness and benevolence. In every breath of the nostril, in every beat of the pulse, in every heave of the heart, in every throb of the bosom, Thou art *Dayanidhi*, the pure, incoming life after the

*Closing prayer after *Ushakeerthan* on Seventy-second Birthday at Pithapuram (16 10 '34).

exhausted, outgoing life. With the beat of the heart is told the tale of Thy love. The heart is Thy clock of record and the pulse Thy wave of expression — all, all bearing testimony to Thy goodness and kindness, of which we have the sweetest taste every second of our lives and yet of the fulness of which we have absolutely no conception. What is the atmosphere around but Thy goodness? What is this inflowing light but Thy goodness? What is all this interminable wealth of the world's products but Thy goodness? What are all the streams and all the rivers, all the groves and all the fields, all the mountains and all the valleys, all the stars above and all the flowers below but Thy goodness? In the chorus of the world's joyous song hour after hour and day after day, we feel blessed with the thrilling experience of Thy goodness. The day comes to repeat the story of Thy goodness. The night comes to count out the tale of Thy goodness. In the activity of life is Thy pulsating goodness. In the repose of body and mind is Thy tranquillising goodness. Thus Thou art the good God, *Dayanidhi*; and unto Thee be all prostrations and salutations, all song and praise !

In the minds of these dear ones gathered round me, there is, I imagine, the thought that during the year left behind Thou didst watch and nurse me through sickness and suffering. But, apart from this in general terms, what know they of the balmy breath that incessantly went through the whole texture of my being, not as medicine against suffering, but as the very elixir unto life and immortality? None knoweth

except the one blest with Thy gracious company how unfailing, how incessant, how intimate is Thy presence, Thy voice, Thy smile, Thy touch, Thy embrace. Thou art the dear One, *Bhagavan*. And as Thou art the dear One, Thou art truly the beneficent One. And as Thou art the benevolent One, Thou art the bliss-giving One, the beatific One. Blessed, blessed be Thy name!

In man's measurement, seventy-two years; but in God's embrace, a mere twinkle, a passing moment, in the immensity of the Eternal! Rich in itself, it is but the earnest of the wealth awaiting every child of Thine. Rendering thanks unto Thee for what has been vouchsafed, we are impelled, too, to praise and glorify Thee for what is kept in store. Be Thou thus the beloved, the beloved One of all! Even as the pilgrim at the start needs courage to step on with hope, the pilgrim reaching the goal needs patience—patience to mark time and await his moment. Thus I feel I need patience, the patience that comes of peace, that is vouchsafed by Thee, the God of peace, that is born not of the struggle of man to keep down despair but of the suggestion of God to trust and watch. God of patience, I commend myself unto Thee. Thou dost vouchsafe all that man needs, each one according to his want and purpose in life. Thou art each one's God and the God of all. And on this solemn day, I once again own Thee, proclaim Thee, glorify Thee, even as my God. May my sisters and brothers realise the import of that glad and glorifying

acknowledgment of my soul—'Thou art my God'! Were the world nothing, were all creation rolled up into the mist of silence, yet Thou art my God, revealing Thyself as my own. I have Thee wholly, fully, entirely, absolutely, as my own. Thou art my God. Having Thee, possessing Thee, visioning Thee, enjoying Thee, what more may man want and need? Yes; truly, Thou art All-in-all — All and in all. 'My own God' — the mind shapes the thought; the tongue utters the word; the soul bows in reverence; the world attunes itself; and the entire race forms the congregation in Thy temple. On this solemn occasion, at this adoring moment in this world-sanctuary, I bow with the kith and kin of my heart before Thee in all the adoration of a grateful and a praising soul.

Forgiveness I need; but I do not ask for it. It is granted even without and before asking, aye, before feeling the need of asking for it. But more than forgiveness — that is only the humblest of Thy mercies — is the redeeming, the regenerating grace which comes so abundantly, so spontaneously and with such solicitude to win and keep me unto Thyself for ever. May I have the good fortune to respond to Thy urge and embrace, and to cast myself upon, Thee with the adoration of a devotee, the affection of a child and the self-surrendering love of a spouse! May I have the grace to render myself unto Thee, the Lord of the heart and the God of the soul! Thine is my all. Nay, my all is from Thee and returns unto Thee by eternal right. Teach me on this solemn day to render back unto Thee

what is Thine own, Thy supreme due, with the willingness, the trustfulness and the cheerfulness of one who feels he is simply doing his prime duty and achieving the real object of his life. Dear God, darkness is light and sorrow is comfort under Thy dispensation — in Thy presence, through Thy company, with Thee to abide with me, to protect me and to guide me. I need not cast about, for I have nowhere to go to. I am not merely with Thee but even in Thee. Thy guidance precisely means that assurance, that surety, that certainty, that confidence and that trust that I am in Thee. Oh, grant me always the consciousness that I am in Thee. The tongue utters lightly and glibly that I am with Thee and in Thee. Oh, may the heart also feel and enjoy the bliss, the ecstasy, of the beatific vision that Thou vouchsafest that I am evermore in Thee! The body shed and discarded like a cloak worn only that Thou mightest reveal Thyself gradually and step by step, and the soul standing before Thee unsheathed in its native sincerity, may I feel that unto Thee I am ever dear like lover unto beloved, spouse unto spouse! May I blend in Thee and rejoice in Thee! This is my humble prayer. Do Thou mercifully deign to vouchsafe it.

In the world's calendar, this day may or may not repeat itself another time. For either course I would render Thee my devoutest thanks with an equal mind. Only, be it granted unto me to bear testimony before these, my sisters and brothers, that Thou art really, indubitably, the good God — *Bhagavan*, *Dayanidhi*. And may it be a humble word, something like a

keepsake, with each of these sisters and brothers —this confession, this testimony that man's all, his eternal welfare, consists in realising Thee and enjoying Thee as *Bhagavan, Dayanidhi* ! That sweetness tasted, that ecstasy enjoyed, man has all. Not only does he need nothing else but he becomes a very prince, aye, an angel. Good God, such is the marvel of Thy grace that it comes not to the rich but to the poor, not to the strong but to the weak, not to the self-complacent but to the self-surrendering. How it rests with me, dwells in all my doings, goes with me wherever I go, and, every minute, testifies to itself with all the marks of richness and grace ! For this dispensation of mercy I humbly render Thee my lowly thanks. Do Thou grant that this acknowledgment may dwell as a memorial, a memento, of brotherly farewell and benediction with each of these dear ones. May they be taught and trained to behold Thee everywhere and always as *Bhagavan, Dayanidhi* ! And may each one among them be vouchsafed the blessing of owning and proclaiming Thee as *Bhagavan, Dayanidhi* ! Oh, the joy, the joy, the joy of Thy *daya* ! May it for ever dwell in each one of us and weave itself into the very texture of his or her life, that so it may prove to be a product and a benediction of that joy of *Bhagavan, Dayanidhi* !

Om ! Brahma Kripahi Kevalam !

Om ! Santhih ! Santhih ! Santhih !

Om ! Harih Om !

III

BIRTHDAY THANKS-OFFERING*

(1928)

Thou Supreme One, All-supreme, supreme in all conceptions and aspirations, ideals and purposes! Thou art the Supreme One, supreme in the supremacy of Thy perfection, Thine absolute wholeness including all, embracing all, expressing all, perfecting all, sanctifying all. Thou art the Supreme Self, the sanctifying Self of the self even in the humblest, the lowliest and the most self-seeking. Aye; Thou art not only the Supreme Self but also the Supremely Selfless. How Thou surpriseest us with Thy selflessness! Thou pervadest all, designest all, providest all and fulfillest all; and yet, in Thy supreme selflessness, Thou slippest out into the back-ground and not only permittest but actually and incessantly ensurest that others should reap the harvest of glory for what, after all, is truly and entirely the doing of Thine own grace. How Thou manifestest Thyself in a myriad ways, and yet remainest behind all those ways that man may feel that he too counts for something and carries some value! Oh, if only we could copy Thee and endeavour after Thy ways, how blessed we should be! For trifles done, for negligible little things endeavoured after and achieved, we seek and are given all the praise and all the glory in an abounding measure. And yet, dear, dear God, it is Thee and

* After *Ushakeerthan* on the Sixty-sixth Birthday 22-10-'28).

Thee alone that we should praise and glorify. We fancy that it is the limb and the organ that are functioning and forget that it is Thy spirit that impelleth and Thy purpose that executeth all that is worthy of acceptance. Thus do we miss Thee in this very labyrinth of Thine own creation! Our whole trouble is that we wander where we ought to pause; we go forth from where we ought to seek; we open the eye, as we believe, but close the mind; and we sing the praise of the prophets and other secondary agencies and miss the worship of the Great and Purposeful Being whose design they portray, proclaim and carry out. But on occasions like this—occasions for the profoundest gratitude side by side with the most self-abasing and self-condemning introspection—we are taught even by Thy grace to see the real from the apparent and discern how it is not the shell without but the vital germ within that constitutes the secret of life. Thou, All-inspiring One, do Thou grant it, as the very fulfilment and crown of Thy whole, redeeming grace, that on these occasions we might rigidly exclude aught that is not divine and worshipfully concentrate on all that is of Thy spirit. Dear God, what is it, after all, that can be counted as not of Thee? Every little throb of the heart, why, every nerve and fibre, every pore, the whole structure and activity of the bare physical frame is truly of Thy inweaving. Our shortcomings and failings, our faults and frailties apart, we are wholly and entirely of Thee and in Thee. Oh, do Thou grant that on an occasion like this we may realise the fulness, the undivided

wholeness of Thine own selfless self. What is a birthday but the returning witness unto Thy ceaseless continuity, the limitless flow of Thy Life and Love, Goodness and Grace? Man is taught even by Thy wisdom thus to pause and gather up the recurring harvest of Thy mercy. The year that is past is past only with reference to the year that is to come. Do Thou grant us the keenness of vision to see how with the true growth of years there comes the increasing report of Thy presence everywhere. If I only counted out Thy wondrous doings even in this, my humble and frail and faulty life, the world would marvel at Thy measureless mercy. At every stage, on untold occasions, what could have been nipped out altogether, Thou didst conserve and rear up with more than the protecting care of a parent. Dear God, what is memory but the correlation of the revelations made by Thee? What is culture but the stock of the wisdom imparted by Thee? What is strength of will but the firmness of the purpose inwoven by Thee? What are all human endeavours but the promptings of Thine ever-available, ever-watchful love for man? And all this Thou hast stocked in all — vegetable, animal and man — as Thine own purposeful benevolence. If I were only disposed to tell how in my own inner life Thou hadst reported Thyself again and again, my benevolent God, it would make, even in the experience of this sinner, a veritable gospel of goodness and grace. What at the time appears to be a straying away from the right path, a deflection from the direct method, Thou convertest into one full purpose rich in variety and ample in scope. Every organ,

every faculty, every passion, all attuned to one divine delight — that is the meaning of life which Thou dost disclose to every one of Thy children, if only they have the eager longing and the thirsting wish for it. They speak of years as so many mile-stones in the course of life; but what a poor comparison this! Not mile-stones along the path but storey upon storey in the temple Thou buildest up with Thine own hand. How vast the plan, how solid the foundation, unseen of human eye but designed by Thee, the Divine Architect! It is Thy Divine Self that alone makes the edifice pure and holy. Thus, poor, frail creature that I am, so sinning in the ways of vice, even I can believe myself to be pure and holy — only, not out of any personal and acquired sanctity. Else were I the most execrable of creatures. Not that Thou dost merely cleanse but that Thou dost also sanctify the whole of Thy shrine—not only a so-called favoured one here or there but every one of Thy children. For this we render our whole-hearted thanks unto Thee. Shall we not thank Thee for all the blessings of the year that lies behind and is to close today? Is not every minute, in fact, a direct blessing from Thee? As he opens his eye at every dawn, man forgets, alas, that it is not he that remembers Thee but Thou Thyself again and again directly tellest him, 'I am here always: thou sleepest but I am awake'. It is not man returning to God but God reawakening in man. Step by step, Thou keepest company with us, never failest to keep Thine eye upon us but ever leadeest and guidest us on with Thy tender love and protection. Not only that; but really Thou

dost share in, aye, take over, the whole arduousness of every task ; and when it is done, how Thou dost vanish ! So, man enjoys the fruit of what Thou hast sown and nurtured. Dear One, the whole of life is permeated by Thine indwelling spirit, ablaze with Thine outshining glory. Blessed, blessed, blessed be Thy name ! Pardon all the shortcomings of this frail creature ; and, oh, grant that if there be aught, even as a mustard-seed, of truth and love in the life lived, it may grow from more to more and proclaim Thy glory. The future is mercifully in Thy hands unto our own well-being. We would not ask what it should be like but supplicate that it might be truly a report of Thy presence in us and with us. How merciful Thou art that Thou hast drawn us together, apparently distant ones, into one circle of fellowship, of love, of worship—a token and an emblem of the heaven designed for us ! Thus to realise our kinship and rejoice over our unity and sing Thy praise—this is our heaven. Blessed be Thou and Thy name ! If there are passing bitters mixed with the permanent sweets of life, that, too, is Thy design that we may share all in sympathy and, above all, come to see how the bitters are preparations for, meant to enrich the relish of, the sweets. Once more, may we have the spirit not merely of silent resignation but of praising trust and adoring confidence that the future is absolutely safe and secure in Thy hands despite what all the heart may and must despair of in this life ! And now and here, through one increasing circle of love and worship, may Thy kingdom gain in strength and peace and happiness, as we repose together in Thee

with all the trustfulness of children, not hoping to carry the whole world with us but longing to find our own security in Thee ! Aloof from Thee, life were no life: it were worse than death, insufferable misery. From that hell do Thou protect me ; for the rest is all heaven. Once again, I thank and praise Thee for the wealth of Thy mercy. Just as in amazing abundance is now descending the refreshing rain to report Thy care, may there fall into our hearts the showers of the Spirit that can sweeten and sanctify them ! While we render unto Thee our hearts' devoutest thanks for all the special manifestations of Thy mercy in the lives and homes of us all, may this prove for me not merely a stock-taking day over the past but a seed-sowing day for the future ! Thy kingdom be established and Thou and Thy name be hallowed now and for ever !

Om ! Brahma Kripah ! Kevalam !
Om ! Santhih ! Santhih ! Santhih !
Om ! Harih Om !

IV
*AKSHARASWEEKARAM**
(1935)

Om ! Salutations and obeisances unto the Supreme Teacher, the *Paramaguru*, whom we turn to and whose presence we seek in the humble, reverent spirit of the soul eager to be illumined even through that profound insight into the reality of life which we value and prize dear as wisdom ! He is the *Paramaguru*, the Teacher who is alike the impartor and the subject-matter of all instruction. What is education but increasing contact between the all-wise Divine Instructor and the ever-reverent human learner ? Aye, it is drawing out the true and the good, the pure and the righteous, enshrined in the centre of our being by God Himself at the very birth of the soul. Blessed, blessed be the grace that thus seeks to enrich and to sanctify the truth-seeking and the holiness-adoring soul through this ever-living, vivid, vital, intimate connection between God and every spirit of which He is the Author and Creator, the Preserver and Protector ! Great God, each child is Thy own gift for this purpose that we be, through Thy grace, employed in the best service possible for each of us, drawing out the latent powers and the germinal virtues in that child. How sacred is that gift of Thine ! Oh that we had sanctity of spirit enough to realise it ! Would we not then,

* Of Sreeman Venkata Ratnam, son of Mr. K. Ramasastri, B. A., B. Ed., and foster-child, Sreemati Saguna Devi, B. A., L. T., at Pithapuram (6-10-'35).

for our own benefit, strive to be God-fearing, true, pure, loyal and loving, in all the interests and relationships of life ? But, alas, how we throw away every one of the God-given opportunities of our own growth and sanctification by neglecting those gifts and all the wealth of their heavenly possibilities !

On this occasion, unto me, the God-forsaken one, do Thou grant out of pure grace the clearness of vision and the certainty of faith that this dear child is sacred because indwelt by Thee, beckoning to me to come and receive even through this living token of Thy eternal solicitude for the salvation of each soul a new hope and a fresh joy that each child of Thine is meant by Thee not only to be saved but sanctified. May I receive through Thy grace this vivid realisation of the divine destiny of every soul to grow in closer, nearer, dearer, sweeter, holier communion with Thee every moment ! Sin-tainted, ignorance-enveloped, convicted even by my own conscience of all that is unrighteous, unholy and ungodly, how dare I presume to point to this eager and trustful soul the light that shines on every path and indicate the landmarks Thou hast set up along the pilgrimage of every child ? I know it not myself, straying so far away from the course of the true pilgrim. How can I disclose and reveal what I do not possess ? Where is the light I see, that I should point to the eager quest of this anxious soul ? Father, Father, keep me out, employ me not for this sacred duty ; but work Thy miracle of grace that it may disclose unto this child the radiance and the charm of true enlightenment from the inflow of

Thy spirit into it. Education — how sacred its purpose, how vast its scope, how rich the mine of truth and love and righteousness that it denotes and promises ! All that, Thou hast meant for every one of Thy children. We throw away all those opportunities ; and we make ourselves for ever outcastes from Thy sanctuary. Where I have failed — neglected, betrayed and, to my eternal shame, suppressed and slaughtered the truth and holiness of Thy imparting, do Thou protect and compensate this child even through my failures and shortcomings and disloyalties. Great God, these, these dear ones fancy I am in vital touch with Thee and I can tell this child what truth means, what education designs and what Thy eternal instruction purposes and provides for each. I know but this much — it is great, glorious, heavenly in its divine import and influence. Grant, in spite of this vile soul, that the child may receive the full benefit of Thy own full instruction. Come in all the glory of holiness into the shrine of this child, and in that holy sanctuary enkindle the light of truth and raise the fragrance of love. Not I but Thou art the Initiator, the Instructor, the true and eternal Mentor and Teacher of this child. Its soul Thy instrument, its heart Thy implement, its mind Thy handiwork, its body Thy abode—be they all rich with the intimate presence of God ! Be all its thoughts framed, all its words shaped, all its desires moulded, its entire will trained after Thy own ways and its body itself employed with all fidelity in Thy sole service ! Great God, in this divine sacrament of *aksharasweekaram*, be the first utterance Thy name, be the second Thy praise, be the third Thy glory, be the

fourth self-surrender unto Thyself in the vision of truth and bliss now, beyond time and through eternity ! Do Thou make of this child a living instance before us of what the Holy of Holies can achieve through each individual soul. Bless it with Thy constant, unfailing presence and Thy varied yet all-embracing illumination. Grant unto our lowly thoughts and our faltering words all the blessing of Thy grace that this child may prove to be itself a blessing unto all that call themselves its kith and kin. They have chosen to give it what they cherish as an auspicious name but what this God-forsaken soul knows to be all too tainted and contaminated by unholiness. Unlike the bankruptcy of worth in him after whom it is named, may it be enriched with true opulence of spirit that the world may realise there what the world fancies it finds here ! The trembling, stammering words of the anguished penitent so welcome to Thy ear — may they find acceptance with Thee and receive grace from Thee, that thus my prayer may prove to be a benediction not for my sake but because it is Thy proper nature to take the corrupt and transform it into the pure, to seize the dark and transfigure it into the radiant, to handle the broken heart and nurture it into the healed spirit ! Thus rendering Thee our lowly adorations, we place this child in Thy hand. Do Thou bless it with the amplest blessing of truth, love and righteousness through all time—now and for ever.

Om ! Brahma Kripahi Kevalam !

Om ! Santhih ! Santhih ! Santhih !

Om ! Harih Om !

V
OUR OWN PRIMARY FACULTIES
(1915)

There is the inevitable assumption that the primary convictions and experiences of our being must be believed as valid, if knowledge is to be possible and judgment is to have the necessary material and data. The simple, inalienable faculties in us upon the working of which these convictions and experiences are based inherently deserve to be, and compulsorily demand that they shall be, trusted and followed. We invariably postulate an external world on the report of the senses. Likewise, we have our own mental processes such as the exercise of memory. It is not possible absolutely to demonstrate the reality of the record of memory any more than it is to establish by proof alone the acceptability of the report of the senses to others. Every such attempt does necessarily involve us in, and commit us to, an assumption of the trustworthiness of one or more of the intuitive faculties of our common human nature. In the very act of either repeating ideas to ourselves or of conveying them to others, we cannot but believe in the reliability of men's normal memory. To distrust as mere unproved assumptions the instinctive impressions of the senses and intimations of memory will be to make our whole life a matter of hide-and-seek, of groping in the dark, or of cutting the ground from under our very feet. Now,

among the pointings of such intuitive consciousness to be of necessity credited as valid for all purposes are also : the cosmological sense that every effect must have a cause, known or unknown ; the moral sense that there subsists an intrinsic distinction between right and wrong, the former worthy of approbation for its own sake and the latter of disapprobation in scorn of consequence ; and the aesthetic sense that beauty carries with it an appeal for appreciation and a message of revelation peculiarly its own. These elemental, natural contents of man's constitution lie at the root of all his life's derivative knowledge and experience and, on the top of it all, of the entire structure of his religious belief and practice.

VI
' IN THE BEGINNING '
(1930)

*Om ! Brahmava ekamidamagra aseeth, nanyah kin-
chineseeth, thadidam sarvamasrujath !*

Thou the Supreme One, the Sacred One, the Sanctifying One ! Thou art the inner meaning of all learning. Thou art the central truth of all knowledge. Thou art the source and spring of all wisdom. Thou art the very perfection of love and righteousness. None of these — truth, wisdom, love, righteousness, or other noble, lofty ideas and conceptions — none of these can mean, can signify, anything except as an expression of Thee, the Perfect Being. In Thee as the Perfect One, all these great ideas and ideals find themselves realised and revealed. And it is Thy most merciful promise unto man to disclose to him the truth, the reality, of Thy own supreme self, to bring home to him the true meaning and the real significance of wisdom, goodness, love and righteousness. Thus man is Thy child by partaking of Thy nature. He is made by Thee a divine image and reflection of Thy perfect attributes and qualities. And thus there is an unbroken, ceaseless, perpetual current of spirit flowing from Thee to Thy child and back from Thy child to Thee, the Parent. In this way, Thou makest man grow through all time in truth, wisdom, goodness and righteousness. And in thus making him grow endlessly, Thou dost provide for His

boundless happiness. It is our benefit and our blessing to keep this current strong and steady by repeated appeals to Thee, by endless and eager quest after Thee. It is in this spirit of hunger and thirst of soul we come to Thee and beseech Thee to illumine the mind, feed the heart and nourish the soul in us. We are here on this occasion for the one purpose of receiving from Thy bounty this blessing of truth, wisdom, goodness, love and righteousness in a fresh and full measure; so that our mind, heart, soul, our whole being, might attain greater light and fuller faith, stronger hope and deeper devotion. We implore Thee on this occasion to make Thyself known to us. Living within bounds and limitations, we cannot but employ these human means of speech and enquiry. But all this is nothing, oh dear God, unless and until Thou dost make the speech truly God-revealing and the enquiry really bliss-bestowing. We fully trust in Thee and unreservedly place ourselves under Thy inspiration. However wanting and weak, frail and failing we be, nothing is too low, too weak, too frail for Thy divine dispensation. Do Thou come into our lowly hearts. Do Thou take possession of our humble faculties. Do Thou shape our shapeless thoughts. Do Thou fill us with the sense of Thy presence. We are unworthy, absolutely unworthy. Yet Thou art all-forgiving, all-embracing. We come to Thee with the faith of children. We feel confident that Thou wilt bless us. May our speech be the voice of truth and the oracle of righteousness! May we grow with mind, heart, soul, every part of our being, rendered wise and lovely, pure and good, gracious and holy,

through Thy blessing — the blessing of the Mother, the blessing of the Preceptor, Protector and Saviour; the blessing of the all-perfect God! Bless us on this occasion with the rich blessing of Thy self-revelation. Blessed be Thy name now and for ever! *Om Thath-sath!*

In what is known among us as *Brahmabeejam*, we are furnished with a very comprehensive statement of religion in its threefold aspect of the doctrinal, the devotional and the practical. Thus it sets out in brief compass the vital elements of true religious experience. A clear, personal realisation of the profound truth of its opening dictum will be of immense help to every aspirant after the life divine.

Here we have the doctrine of the One only God, starting with what may be considered as the key-note, the corner-stone, of the whole system. '*Brahmava ekam*' — this presents the basic idea of the Brahmo message. At first sight, it may look like a too familiar and popular idea. But it is far more than merely commonplace. The terms '*Brahma*' and '*ekam*' — *ekam* as applied to *Brahma* — contain quite a mine of meaning.

To begin with, of all the epithets employed to designate God, '*Brahma*' is admittedly the loftiest in sublimity. Hence, the Brahma Samaj has chosen this epithet as *par excellence* the highest and the most

surpassing epithet of God. And because of this designation being adopted by them for the Deity, the body of believers so contemplating Him has come to be known as the 'Brahma Samajists'. Now, this characteristically distinctive name of the Deity as *Brahma* — what does it denote, and what does it deny ; what does it include and what does it exclude? Everything suggestive of limitation or condition through time and space, in power and faculty, must be eschewed as altogether outside of, utterly incompatible with, this idea. Then arises the question : If no limitation or condition is recognised in *Brahma*, what is there to posit and to think of at all ; ourselves being limited and conditioned, how, indeed, can we refuse to attach any limitation and condition to our conception of the Godhead? On this point, we have gradually to rise to a vivid apprehension of the truth about our own common human nature itself. In fact, the most important function of religion at the outset is to bring home to every human being the truth about himself, namely, the noble, divine consciousness and conviction that, though starting with the certainty of experience that he is hemmed in by limitations and conditions, man can and must yet be so trained and taught, so directed and developed, as to see that, at bottom and in essence, he is unlimited and unconditioned — unlimited by time or space, unconditioned by desires and needs. This is the primary, fundamental principle of religion. Thus, in adopting the name '*Brahma*' as the distinguishing epithet of God out of all the numberless names in use, the *Brahmo*, at the same time, recognises that the

human personality is not merely the background of sensations that come and go but that there abides an unconditioned spirit as the vital core of his being and this latter is really rooted in, comprised in, has its pivot fixed in, the Absolute to whom we give the name of God. Only for this reason is man the image of God, namely, inasmuch as the unconditioned, perfect God stands figured, reflected, reproduced, mirrored and made manifest in the human soul, itself howsoever conditioned and imperfect. The very fact that the soul is capable of attaining to the consciousness of the Unconditioned, is itself sufficient to make it imperative to hold that, apparently conditioned in the finite, man is really unconditioned in the Infinite. For, none can truly soar beyond his own ultimate nature in his thoughts and conceptions. If we are conscious of the capability of our own expansion into the Unconditioned as the finest and fullest measure of our nature, we may take it that we are fundamentally unconditioned. Therefore, I repeat, in accepting the name of 'Brahma' for the Deity, the Brahma Samaj has made it the first principle of its religion to receive and to deliver the message not merely of the Unconditioned God but also of the self-expression of that God in nature and, still more, in humanity, this latter partaking more fully of divinity through the unique feature of self-consciousness.

Next, concentrating upon the epithet '*ekam*', what exactly is it that we grasp? It is not that there cannot be a second numerically to count by the side of Brahma but that there can be nothing beyond psychologically to

conceive at all. The One Absolute is the one that includes all, that enfolds all, that informs all in a complete and perfectly consistent, organically synthetic unity. And as we grow more and more into a living sense of this unity, we see a new light and a new joy bathing the whole universe. It is increasingly perceived to be a unity which, in design and destiny, allows scope enough for the innumerable forms and countless shapes that truth and wisdom, goodness and righteousness, assume through the march of time in the story of human progress. Such is the all-embracing richness that unifies all and makes one of the all by virtue of the All-in-all.

And so, the enunciation in *Brahmabeejam* proceeds to point out that Brahma must logically be the 'agra', First and Foremost : *ne plus ultra*. Nothing can be un- included in His being, which is supreme in its very nature.

And then, the same truth is enforced negatively in the converse proposition that follows — ' *nanyah kin-chinaseeth* ' : nothing outside existed or exists at all. As there never was or is aught beyond Him, so there never was aught before Him. The All-inclusive must be also the Ever-creative. Hence creation is far from an event in time.

What a tremendously awe-inspiring, almost overwhelming responsibility is thus cast upon us as we undertake to affirm the supreme existence of the ' One only without a second ' in such terms of absoluteness as

to render it impossible to so much as imagine the co-existence of even the tiniest of monads by His side ! In this comprehensive formulation of Brahma, there lies, at the same time, the blessed comfort that all clashes and conflicts, all seeming oppositions and antagonisms, all elements of inexplicable occurrences and apparently irregular happenings, find their own harmony and solution, one after another, through a persistent and reverent waiting upon His presence. Thus the quest after Him as the Most High and yet the Nighest becomes the eternal occupation of the human soul for His glory and for peace and goodwill among His children.

VII
LOVE, CREATION AND IMMORTALITY
(1930)

Namasthe sathethe jagathkaranaya ; namasthe chithe sarvalokasrayaya ; namodwaitha-thathwaya ; mukthipradaya ; namo Brahmane vyapine saswathaya.

Here, in this opening verse of our *goshti-prardhana*, is a fairly suggestive epitome of the whole cosmic process — its origin and objective, its source and sequel. ‘*Sathethe jagathkaranaya*’: as the Supreme Reality, Brahman is the cause of creation. ‘*Chithe sarvalokasrayaya*’: as Self-conscious Wisdom, He is the refuge — the support and the sustaining strength — of all the worlds. ‘*Adwaithathathwaya*’: differentiated though in self-manifestation, He is yet undivided in essence. ‘*Mukthipradaya*’: Himself absolute, He is the bestower of deliverance from all limited and conditioned existence. ‘*Vyapine saswathaya*’: all-pervading, He is also the ever-abiding. Thus, the story of the universe through its stages of undifferentiated agglomeration, self-differentiating disintegration, self-gathering reintegration and self-contained resumption, is all the *leela* of Brahman moving from Brahman, unto Brahman, and into Brahman. And all this is because Brahman is Love and Love alone — ‘*Brahma Kripahi Kevalam*’ — in the several aspects of God and the world, God in the

world, and the world in God. Accordingly, the what and wherefore of creation is traceable to what is summed up in the Saiva siddhantha as '*Ambe Sivam*' and in the Johannine dictum as 'God is Love'. For, evermore, the inherent characteristic of Love is creativeness. There simply can be no love without being creative. Its very purpose is multiplication — not division, not stagnation. That way alone, the *Adwaittham* realises itself as the *Suddham*, the Perfect. It is not '*achalam*' like a mountain. But it is '*nischalam*', even as is a full-flowing river suffering no obstruction and reaching no end. The relationship of God to creation is one, not of temporal priority, but of causal priority. Creation is *anadi* only in Him and because of Him who is the Beginningless in self-manifestation. In our conception, of course, we are able to think only separately of the seed and the tree. Nevertheless, we have got to rise to the perception of the one included in the other. So, too, as between sun and light; who can tell which is before and which is after? There is the Milky Way beyond the grasp of the telescope. The reason given is that the light from over there has not yet reached down to this earth amid the vastness of the universe. In the cyclic view of the Self subsisting in itself, coming out of itself, returning to itself and remaining in itself — *vyapakam* in *ekam* and *ekam* in *vyapakam*, God is apprehended as possessed of one compound quality and not of so many different qualities. The unity of the Divine is not arithmetical unity; but it is metaphysical unity. Perhaps, we may picture it to ourselves as something like the unity of the white ray under

which image alone the natural quality of each of the seven prismatic rays can best make itself felt in the blend of harmony. God is the all-composite One. It is not 'unit' but 'unity' — unity-in-difference. And difference is not division. It is rather differentiation without division, as between husband and wife. In the arithmetic of love, he and she together make the unit. As such, true *yoga* in Theistic consciousness does not consist in an ascent to transcendence through the negation of immanence as mere *maya*. It consists in the vision of both transcendence and immanence in one. It is proper to call the cosmic process one of emanation in the sense of a perpetual outflow from the exhaustless reservoir of the Infinite rather than one of creation by way of an outside projection. Existence reflects itself upon non-existence; being casts itself upon non-being; and the resultant phenomenon is the world and the individualised self. Love loves to love, as the poet puts it. In other words, love inherently wants an object of love. 'Oh Mahammad, but for thee we would not have created the world!' So in the Koran the Creator says to the apprehending and adoring human soul. The eye sees everything except itself. And memory recollects everything except the time when it started; it cannot remember when it was born. So, as being part and parcel of creation, I cannot exactly see how and when creation started, unless I am out of it. Thus in the light of the broad principle, 'No manifestation, no deity,' it is only in and through the perfected human that the perfect Divine ever seeks to behold Himself. Therefore, it will not do for the shadow to set little

store by itself. It must aim loftily at self-fulfilment by reproducing the original with more and more fulness and clearness. Says Jalaluddin Rumi, 'You are a mirror. So, reflect more and more, clearer and clearer'. Only as it develops in that way does the reflection grow into the original. Not that it ever comes to qualify as a substitute for the original. The soul is like the sensitive plate in the photographic apparatus; and the picture must needs fall short somewhere in the matter of reproduction. The approach to God is not as if by increasing nearness in distance but by growing similarity in nature.

And that is what Salvation means. It is eternal, Godward progress. The reflecting object necessarily endures as long as the reflected original subsists. Unless the primal Being dissolves Himself, His reflection in the human soul and, therefore, the human soul itself cannot possibly go out of existence. I am meant to be an object of love by God and for God — the God of eternal love. This is the ultimate ground of immortality. Where there is love there is no division, no divorce, no disruption. And real love, by its very nature, must be growing every day and every moment. True *bhakti* is an appetite which can know no fulness of satisfaction and, consequently, no stoppage through finality. To express the same idea in terms of the quest after truth, an all-wise Author's work has to be read and re-read always. Turning to the standpoint of the Divine, we see with the poet that where God once loves He loves for ever. That, briefly, is the difference between

our love and God's love. Why does our love fail? It falls because our knowledge of the beloved is defective; and hence arises divorce. But when God has once accepted the soul as His own spouse with the plenary perfectness of His own knowledge, there is no possibility of cessation in the sphere of eternal love. He is not going to give me up on any account. In fact, whither can I go away beyond the range of His love? No, not even into annihilation. What is this ideal of Love? It is just this: 'Even if abandoned by thee, I *will* not abandon thee'. So, of old, the wife killed herself when the husband passed away. The same assurance is brought home by the study of life as life—in reference to its distinguishing characteristics. Firstly, it has a certain inner force which is free, free in the sense of going in a determinate direction. Secondly, it has the capacity of growing as it has of going. Thirdly, it has the power of reproduction; for life must create life. Thus life is life only in so far as it is free, expansive and reproductive. And this necessitates immortality for the sake of eternal progress in reintegrated resumption into the Deity. When true internationalism is reached along this line, there comes to be the fullest life in the body politic. All friction vanishes; and productiveness rises to the maximum level. As each soul and each nation grows more and more into God and becomes more and more of God, it also becomes more and more like other souls and other nationalities. All progress together to one end; and that end is divine humanity, a humanity living in God and lived in by God. As God lives in us, our living in God is immortal, and our living in brother

and sister souls is also immortal. If I live immortally in you and you in me, and each of us in God, we cannot but rejoice in one another, rejoice that we are growing together into oneness with our God. Thus all rivalry ceases. And this attains its focussing point in our rejoicing together in God. Hence the picture, given in the Bhakti school, of Sree Krishna and the Gopis. He rejoices in each of them. They rejoice each in Him. They rejoice in one another. And He and they rejoice and dance together in love. *Angana* and Madhava, *angana* and Madhava — that is the circle of souls in the Divine Dance. It is endless. It is also ever-increasing, because it is growing every moment as each new-born soul joins it. What matters it if every soul depart once from this particular physical plane? Even on the material side, do we not hold that when a candle burns, nothing is lost; that only the form is changed while the total weight of the ingredients is not reduced? This is truth to the scientist, though it is not truth to the merchant. Likewise, in the ultimate, it is an equally scientific certitude that when the body dies, nothing is lost. This is truth for ever to God, though not now to you and to me. But, more and more, we must and shall learn to unify our vision with His. We say time is the great healer. What does it mean? It means all illusions are bound to be shed in due course and the truth must dawn one day from behind the veil. That truth is the truth of corporate eternal life for all the children of immortality, *amrithasya puthrah*. I grow into humanity; humanity grows into me; and we grow into the God whose emanations we are.

VIII
THE MYSTIC LINE
BETWEEN HUMAN AND DIVINE
(1938)

' Draw, if thou canst, the mystic line
Severing rightly his from thine,
Which is human, which divine '.

—Emerson : *Worship*

There is a significant, if amusing, story about a lady-passenger on board a steamer over the wide Atlantic. At a particular stage in the voyage, the captain remarked that they were about to cross the Equator. The good lady, who expected it to be some visible phenomenon on the surface of the ocean, kept a vigilant watch upon the deck to give herself the pleasure of observing the same. She waited and waited for hours, only never to witness the sight so eagerly looked for. Poor woman, she had no knowledge that what the captain had spoken of was only an imaginary line. Likewise, though the oceans bear different names when seen in a map, yet the water in them is all one and the same and knows no demarcation or separation. Again, there is the mother offering milk; and there is the child sucking the milk. The latter act is merely a continuation of the former. Both together constitute one continuous and complete process. The

borderland or the boundary-line lies only in individualising the experience into 'I am giving the milk', in the one case, and 'I am sucking it', in the other. As soon as ever the young one of the ass is given birth to, the mother bites off its umbilical cord and brings her teats within close reach of its mouth. These take place in quick succession so as to make one single course.

In reality, then, there is no such thing as partition to the synthetic eye. So, as between the devotee and the Deity, Jalaluddin Rumi observes: 'By the time I turn once to Thee, I already find Thou hast turned twenty times towards me'. Human endeavour there is, of course; but even that is only an expression of the Divine Will. The *Gita* declaration that the Supreme Spirit is the highest in every species and the noblest in every act, is intended suggestively to prepare the soul for this sense of the subtlest unity between the human and the Divine in the loftiest and the profoundest of aspects.

At the same time, the fact that God is doing everything in and for me does not imply that I need do nothing myself. It only means that in that state of inaction on my part, He is not yet getting anything done through me. The mysterious truth remains that, even as to what we do ourselves, He does it through us; in fact, He does everything, but only remains behind the veil. The cultivator thinks he has done all himself so far as the produce of his field is concerned. But what a catena of other secondary causes rests behind! As

Tennyson's 'Ancient Sage' reminds us, back of the wealth of waters in the stream there is the dark cave of the inner womb of the mountain; further back are the clouds that hide the summit half a league up in the air; and still further beyond are the heavens by which the clouds are moulded and out of which they have descended; and the whole comprises but one process, bringing home the ultimate lesson alike of science and religion that 'Force is from the heights'. Here, man is not robbed of his credit, provided it is realised that that, too, is God's gift. In fine, there is nothing for which man may take independent credit, as there is nothing for which God does take overt credit. It is not, then, for nothing that Saadi declares he witnesses the double grace of God in every breath of his nostrils. In the entire round of life, there is not a throb of the pulse that lies outside the range of His appointment and His control.

IX

RECIPROCITY IN WORSHIP

(1929)

Is worship really a meeting-place of the Divine and the human spirit, or is it merely an endeavour on the side of man to become better and purer step by step? Is worship like the magnet and the needle coming toward each other by strong mutual attraction, or is it like ascending a hill in order to see something beautiful from its summit? In worship, are both the Divine and the human actively operating, or is it that the Divine simply watches and waits while the human alone is active? Is worship the intercourse of the Divine and the human like the coming together of the mother and the child, each lovingly rejoicing in the other, or is it a barely one-sided spiritual exercise like physical exercise?

In considering this very important aspect of the problem of worship, the need for worship itself is not necessary to be gone into at the outset. For, wherever there is religion, there is worship in some form or other. Worship is characteristic of religion. Worship is a common feature of human endeavour in its aspiration after the Divine.

Granting it to be a united operation between the devotee and the Deity, most people hold that worship starts with man and it is he who brings God into touch.

with himself. But some feel the start is made by God Himself and it is the urge of the Divine Spirit that moves man to the endeavour after worship.

How does the truth stand as between these two views? Let us say, the teacher is teaching, and the pupil is learning. The demarcation here is one of quality, not of quantity. Without limiting and narrowing himself, the teacher has got to adjust himself to the needs of the pupil. He should know what exactly the pupil wants. Going on from the known to the unknown is to be the method of the teacher. The pupil, for his own part, has to open his own mind and be ready to receive. His proper function, therefore, is receptivity through a desire to imbibe the knowledge imparted by the teacher. As the teacher fails unless he adapts himself to the capacity and taste of the pupil, so the pupil fails unless he cultivates receptivity and keeps his mind open to the teaching he receives. Similar is the relation between the worshipper and the worshipped. The point may be made clearer by means of another illustration, quite a homely one. There is suckling and sucking going on as between the mother and the child. Does the mother do the whole thing, or does the child do the whole thing? It is difficult to tell. Unless the mother places the nipple of her bosom in the mouth of the child, the child never learns to suck milk at all. At the same time, unless the child applies its tongue and mouth with pressure to the nipple of the mother's bosom, the milk there cannot find a way out at all. So there is action and reaction. Physiologists say that when the nipple

is put in the mouth of the baby, a particular sensation is created in that mouth, making it close in such a way that the tongue presses the nipple against the upper part of the mouth and causes the milk to flow into the mouth. That points also to an adaptive arrangement in the very constitution of the mother's bosom, to begin with. So we are enabled to see how, in worship, the process of reciprocation is held by some to begin on the side of God. The Sufis, in particular, believe that the endeavour comes first on the part of God Almighty to put forth attraction and that it goes to create a responsive attraction on the part of man. As God wants to teach and persuade and not to compel and coerce, His initiative influence remains so gentle and imperceptible that the human soul not unoften feels as though it has itself started the communion. Yet, the fact is that in the very purposing of creation, in the very calling of a soul into being with certain, inherent cravings, God is committed to the obligation of Himself inducing and developing the spirit of devotion in that soul. Therefore, in worship, the inspiration of God and the aspiration of man, or, again, the aspiration of man and the inspiration of God, really go together. Without the urge created and quickened by God, there could be no longing for worship in the human breast. Likewise, without man lending himself consciously and willingly to the stimulus of God, the spirit could not descend upon him from on high.

Some say that the relation between God and man is symbolised by the cat carrying the kitten from place

to place, the latter simply allowing itself to be held up in all passiveness between the teeth of the former : *marjala kisora nyayam*. Others say it is typified by the monkey merely bearing its young one about as it keeps clinging fast to the belly of the mother : *markata kisora nyayam*. But between these two theories there is another. It is neither of them precisely. It represents, rather, the rule of reciprocation, as between husband and wife, in which there is a mutual holding on at work : *nayakee nayaka nyayam*. Here, no line of demarcation can be drawn. It is a perpetual interflowing of spirits into each other. The husband elicits by his merit the profound admiration of the wife. And, in her turn, the wife elicits by her charms the entire affection of the husband. It has been said of our good Dr. B. C. Ghosh's wife that when some one remarked to her how considerable had been the sacrifice on her side as a European in her marriage with an Indian, she simply observed she alone knew of the far greater sacrifice made by Dr. Ghosh himself in preferring a foreigner like her for his consort to the exclusion of many an eligible lady of his own land. That is how the test of true love consists in mutual sacrifice. In the Koran, we note that God said to Mahammad, 'I have created thee for My own enjoyment, happiness and glory'. And Mahammad answered, 'Aye ; and *my* enjoyment, happiness and glory consists and shall consist in living for Thee alone'. Such is the true relation between God and man. We read of the penguin, a sea-fowl in the southern hemisphere, which is said to feed its young out of its own heart. It is this penguin spirit that is most

wonderfully at work as between God and humanity. He fills us with His own nature ; He feeds us out of His own substance ; and He effects the inflow of His own self into us through the channel of worship.

The question will perhaps arise, ' How, then, is it my fault if I don't worship, seeing that the impulse to worship is traced to a source other than myself ? ' The answer is simple. In the physical government of the universe, there is compulsion, of course ; but in the moral, there is only suggestion, there is only persuasion. If I do not worship, it does not mean that God never instilled that impulse into me but that, on my side, I have not made efforts to keep my mind open to the inducement of God. His wisdom, righteousness and love all lie in starting the work of attraction of souls to Himself without bringing any force to bear upon them further. There is no good in any one being driven automatically into the worshipping attitude. There is, however, available always the benefit of the company of the devout to enable one to appraise for oneself what all of good — of real, lasting good — self-rendering worship has done to others. Man's responsibility, therefore, lies in reading his own nature aright and recognising from it that there is such a thing as the inalienable need for worship on his part. Every one, accordingly, has to ask himself, " Has not God dowered me with the ' incitement ' to worship ? Or, am I suffering it to be starved out of me by degrees ? " Feel you no honest propensity for worship ? Then, at least, come and sit with genuine worshippers ; and that will make you alive

to that which you ignore in yourself. One Sufi said, 'I have been praying to God these twenty years; yet He hears me not.' Another answered, 'My brother, thou shouldst not have turned towards God in *prayer*, had not God *first* turned towards thee in *grace*. It is the Divine urge that prompts human devotion. It is God within the soul that has inspired and sustained thy quest eternal through these twenty years. Oh, pursue thou that quest stedfastly even as the supreme end of thy life.'

X

FOURFOLD REALISATION IN WORSHIP

(1929)

The first part in the opening verse of our *Goshti-prardhana* is ' *Namasthe Sathethe Jagathkaranaya* '. The second is ' *Namasthe Chithe Sarvalokaśrayaya* ' The third is ' *Namodwaithathatthwaya Mukthipradaya* '. And the fourth and last is ' *Namo Brahmane Vyapine Saswathaya* '. Now, these four parts of the verse represent the four stages in the spiritual life and growth of man. They express the four successive aspects in which God brings Himself home to the soul of man. Firstly, He is the Creator, the Origin, the Fountain-head of all things; He it is that sends out all the worlds. Secondly, through all successive grades of development, He is the great, providential Care-taker and Supporter of the universe. He not only starts but continues. And continuation means variety and multiplicity, diversity and digression, and so forth. It means not peace and harmony but only activity and energy. Thirdly, therefore, follows the stage of harmony, homogeneity and unity of purpose in *adwaithathatthwam*. When this is disclosed, it is *mukthi*, the fullest freedom in the completest harmony. And fourthly, there is the last stage of the continuous, uninterrupted flow of eternal life.

Thus, the first is the starting; the second is the multiplying; the third is the harmonising, unifying, consolidating; and the fourth is the keeping on continuously. Altogether, the Supreme Self spontaneously coming out of itself, continuously multiplying out of itself, and as continuously returning to itself—this completes the circle; and the perfect stage thus attained is eternal. Through these stages, then, we have to realise that He is, firstly, the *Sath*, the True; secondly, the *Chith*, the Self-Conscious; thirdly, the *Adwaitam*, the Indivisible; and fourthly, the *Saswatham*, the Everlasting.

And these four are aspects to be realised in the exercises of Worship. In *Udbodhana* we realise the first aspect. We elevate ourselves from the particular and the temporal into the vast and the eternal, thus turning to the true vision of things. As *Upasana* means 'sitting near' Him, the function of *Udbodhana* lies in thus ushering ourselves into the presence of the God who is all-pervasive. We are led to worship Him, because He is All-in-all, because in Him we find the fullest meaning and the deepest purpose of life. Unless we are thus focussed at the outset upon that experience, we really cannot go further and our worship is bound to remain very imperfect. Worship requires perfect freedom; and this comes alone from the intensest desire of the heart finding the fullest satisfaction. 'I have complete faith in Him, namely, that I can get all that I want from Him. Hence, there is the fullest freedom with Him.' And this is why I am prepared to disclose all secrets to Him. Then we pass on to *Aradhana*—the adoration of *Chidvilasam*;

we enter into the *leela* of not merely sustaining but also of evolving with the delight of purposive and infallible wisdom. *Aradhana*, on the worshipper's side, means realising the joy of the Self-conscious and being filled with rejoicing admiration for Him and His workings. Adoration is briefly defined by Carlyle as infinite admiration. 'Let us enjoy it more and more. Is He so good, so enrapturing? Let us drive it, then, into our whole being by a longer, intenser enjoyment of it.' That is *Aradhana*, the core of spiritual experience—going into, abiding in, and enjoying the Deity; and, out of that enjoyment, saying, 'I am Thine; I wish to be Thine exclusively.' So that, as *Aradhana* leads to *Dhyana*, we proceed to the third stage, that of meditation or contemplation, of being carried into a profounder experience in receiving into the spirit more and more of the joy of *Aradhana*. There is no longer that separate consciousness which attended the initial office of *Udbodhana*; but joy ineffable there is. Next, after *Dhyana*, comes *Goshti-prardhana* by way of a perfectly natural consequent. How beautifully, indeed, have the *slokas* in this congregational chant been arranged together for us by the spiritual genius of Maharshi! The *Sthothram* breaks out with the rapturous ecstasy of the soul in the wake of serene self-absorption in *Dhyana* and in unison with the like emotion of sister-and-brother souls. In Him alone are all things; so on Him alone depend all things, our own selves included. As the all-sustaining and the all-ordaining One, we go to Him; and after telling Him for our satisfaction that He is the Sublimest and so on, we go into greater and

still greater rapture when the heart is full, and say, 'We entrust ourselves to Thee as the only Pilot of the ocean — '*Bhavambhodhi potham*'. Consequently, *Stkothram* leads to *Prardhana* as the fourth and final stage. He is *Nithyam*, *Saswatham*; and we render ourselves into His being; into the inmost nature of the Deity we flow. Having so far proceeded from the worship of the Creator to the worship of the Preserver and, thence, to the worship of the Saviour, and thus entered deeper and deeper into the joy of the Lord, we advance at the end to the consummating stage of unreserved self-surrender: *Asathoma sadgamaya*; *thamasoma jyothirgamaya*; *mrith-yormamrithamgamaya*.

To sum up. The impelling start, the diversifying expansion, the unifying harmonisation and the eternal perpetuation — these mark the four main stages of realisation in Worship. 'My Mother satisfies me' — this assurance is *Udbodhana*. 'The child wants to be the mutually recognising and recognised child of the Mother' — this yearning is *Aradhana*. The first is the thought or the knowledge or, better, the recollection that there is the Mother. The second is the joy of looking at the Mother and renewing the relationship with the Mother. Then, there is the joy of embracing the Mother. And lastly, there is the bliss of sitting in the lap of the Mother. That is the *finis*: nothing more is required. In other words, thinking of or upon God, thinking unto God, describing and glorifying God, retreating into and rejoicing in God, surrendering the self unto God— these comprise the attitudes and activities involved in every

adequate act of complete worship. The *Gita* specifies substantially the same elements and engagements and in the same sequence. God is first defined as the Best in every thing, in every variety and group. Then comes the actual vision of it. The *darsana* at first is simply terrific. So the beholder implores the Lord of the vision beatific to show His usual form. The first revelation of God is something awesome, *rudra*. But soon He impresses Himself also through His gentle face, '*dakshinam mukham*'. The awe-inspiring God is thus disclosed on further experience as no other than the all-beneficent God. In Him, supremacy and grandeur include also the condescending and gracious nature. Unto that nature in the All-compassionate we appeal; and upon it we are content to rest through time and eternity.

XI
METHOD *VERSUS* SPIRIT IN WORSHIP
(1929)

Thou art our Father. Thou dost teach us, train us, guide us and for ever take us along the straight and narrow path of truth, love and righteousness. Thou art our unfailing Companion and unerring Guide. But for Thy guiding light and sustaining grace, how erring, how feeble, how helpless we should be! But being Thy children, we are for ever in Thy care, in Thy charge. Literally like a mother, Thou dost hold us by the hand and lead our steps onward, even as Thou hast brought us Thyself into being. Thou hast assigned it to Thyself as Thy purpose and Thy pleasure in each one of us. How strikingly different we are, one from another, in knowledge and capacity, in aims and aspirations! And yet such is Thy marvellous mercy, Thy miraculous grace, that Thou suitest Thyself to each one of us. There is no mind so ignorant that Thou dost not enlighten it with wisdom. There is no heart so selfish that Thou dost not touch it with love. There is no conscience so dull that Thou dost not quicken it with the sense of right. There is no soul so gross in worldliness that Thou dost not uplift it into the reality of the other world. And there is no home so self-centred that Thou dost not move it to something of neighbourly sympathy and attachment. Indeed, even below the plane of human nature, even

among the lower animals so called, Thou workest Thy purposes through the force of instinct following what is safe, receiving what is wholesome and rejecting what is injurious. But in man, Thou workest in Thy wisdom according to the rule of reason and judgment made clear and sure by the light of Thy inspiration and rendered absolutely binding and obligatory by the direct command of Thy own voice. For thus lifting us above the animal into the human and then expanding us from the human into the divine, we render Thee our devoutest thanks. We owe it all to Thy mercy and grace. How Thou always keepest company with us for the sole purpose of bringing us nearer and nearer to a full and clear sense and understanding of our lives as being shaped, moulded and used by Thee for Thy divine ends! And thus Thou dost help us to bring out the best in us and outlive the base in us. Our ardent love for Thee, our loyal devotion to Thee, our willing self-surrender to Thee, our abounding joy in Thee — they grow limitlessly and keep us ready alike to do the right and rejoice in the righteous. And this direct and enduring touch of Thy holy being with the very vital centre of our existence — this is what we are meant to realise in the solemn exercises of worship. Such worship Thou hast meant and designed entirely for the purpose of elevating our spirits into the sublime and blissful state of complete identification with Thee in the whole range of life. And Thou hast, through countless ages and by means of numberless instances, declared to us more and more clearly and fully how this worship means life lived in, love rendered unto, and bliss enjoyed with, Thee as

the central, vital Being of the whole creation. Into the full and perfect bliss of such true worship Thou art leading us stage after stage. Oh Thou all-illuminating, all-sanctifying God, may it please Thee more than ever before to vouchsafe to us on this occasion the blessed experience of the strength and the sanctity that come of true worship ! We humbly and trustfully place ourselves in Thy hands, fully knowing and believing that Thy guidance will be granted to us. Teach us Thy truth ; and in Thy wisdom make us wise. *Om ! Thatath sath !*

The question is so often before us, ' What does it matter by what method we worship, so long as we worship in the spirit of sincere devotion ?'

Now, true religion is concerned with Him who is ' One only without a second', One the like of whom we cannot conceive of. If it be granted that the true idea of God is that of One the like of whom is nowhere, there is no place any longer for a material symbol in worship. Symbols are possible only when our idea of God is limited. And this possibility is ruled out as the idea of God becomes perfect. It is only parts of the sky but not its whole that can be photographed. Even assuming that the sky is photographed with all its countless stars, the plate or plates so produced can be of some use only when we know the distinction between the starry world above and the pictures below and of no use at all when that world is not known to exist. To say that the pictures are the same as, or as good as, the stars is

plainly out of the question. Hence, in religion, there is no point in setting up symbols unless we are alive to the existence and character of the original and unless also we refrain altogether from ascribing to the symbols the qualities of the original. Either way, their value as substitutes is emptied out because, in the former case, they become superfluous and, in the latter, misleading. It is remarkable how disharmonious ideas of God as the Infinite Being and as a finite being run concurrently in the *sthothramanthras* repeated by the idolator during worship. For instance, '*Om Janakeepathaye namah*' is uttered side by side — in the same breath — with '*Om Viswapathaye namah*'. If only the idolator understands the drift of such incongruous and conflicting attributes, his method of worship cannot but be discounted by himself as not only superfluous but also positively misleading. Yet it is strange how this circumstance comes to be persistently overlooked in the subtle defence put forward for Idolatry by our educated brethren in the country. After all, is there any one really so poor in intelligence or so dim in vision that he cannot understand in his own way that God is everywhere and that His doings are everywhere? Asks Rajah Rammohm Ray: Has it not become possible for the vast millions of Islamic and Christian nations outside and for the Nanakpanthis, Kabirpanthis and other protestant monotheists inside the Hindu pale to get on without idols? How emphatically do the Upanishads declare that only when we realise God within the heart is there true peace of soul! '*Netharesham*' — that is the unambiguous expression employed.

'I am absorbed in my love of God. There is no more vacancy in my heart for you as well'. So, according to the story, Rabbia, the Sufi devotee, said to Mahammad the Prophet, as he appeared to her in a dream and asked her why she did not love him. That is just what keeps out all idols as well as all incarnations from the Theistic system.

Of course, God the Merciful enters even into imperfect, erring and misguided modes of worship. But this does not mean that He identifies Himself equally with all those methods. There are occasions when, full of enthusiasm for the mother, the child now kisses her, now laughs at her, now grins at her, now applies to her all sorts of queer names, and sometimes even bites her. And, however improper the way in which the child shows its love, the mother at once perceives that love. This only establishes how piercing is the understanding and how forbearing is the patience of the mother. At the same time, does she not, at every turn, try in all gentleness to teach the child what better methods there are of its showing its love for her, even as she says 'No, no' to the silly demonstrations in evidence?

The soul should be wedded to God. This does not mean that, instead, you can make two images and marry them, one to the other. If God is dear to the devotee, he will insist on being himself completely wiped out of existence before God is spoken ill of or subjected to any other kind of indignity by anybody. You mix milk with water, and put it on the fire. The

milk is not touched until all the water is heated up. Such is the devotion of the wife to the husband that she will not suffer him to be injured until she herself is destroyed. The story goes that Siva has two worshippers, one worshipping Him with good and the other with bad water. Parvati detests the second. But Siva proves by a practical test that he is really the better worshipper of the two. The temple is apparently made to be coming down with a crash. The first devotee takes fright and runs away from the *pooja*. The second remains firm and continues it. The underlying principle here is only this: 'Let me injure myself before I can allow my Lord to be injured'.

Of course, it is wrong to think that no training is required as a preparation for right worship. On the other hand, just as it is found necessary for the pupil to receive a certain course of instruction if he is to have a correct notion that the earth is round in shape, so also there is the need for a certain amount of training in spiritual worship—training which must vary with the capacity of the worshipper. Thus the highest stage in religion is reached when it becomes perfectly natural for the soul to worship in spirit and in truth. But how is the perfectly natural stage to be held as attainable at all unless the naturalness is there more or less in the lower, that is, the earlier stages also? And how is image-worship a means to, or a preparation for, such progress towards spiritual worship? That is the question, a counter-question, which calls for a satisfactory answer.

XII
GOD AND THE IDOL
(1938)

How does it follow that the idol is God because God is everywhere? Are we sure there lurks no fallacy here? The library-room consists of some tables, some chairs, some almyrahs with collections of books, several windows, doors *et cetera*. But can you go and say that each or any of these divers contents is the library-room in itself? God must be realised as present everywhere and not localised in any single object even in the hour of worship. If the idol were God, God would not be everywhere. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that all-inclusive immanence is one thing and delimiting localisation is quite another thing.

XIII
THE RELISH FOR WORSHIP
(1930)

Our beloved, our adored God ! Thou art our All-in-all. As such, Thou hast been and art always and everywhere with us. As the unfailing Presence, Thou art the constant Companion and the tireless Care-taker of our lives. By the touch of Thy spirit, by the vision of Thy glory, by the thrill of Thy holiness, by the rapture of Thy beauty and by the transporting embrace of Thy compassion, Thou dost provide measurelessly for all wants and sanctify beyond utterance every relation and every occupation, every desire and every aspiration. It is Thy self-revelation unto us that is alike the purpose and the privilege, the destiny and the delight, of our lives. As we come here together, it is with yearning hearts and hungering souls that we approach Thee to be fed by Thine own hand with the nutriment of truth, love, righteousness and beauty. Vouchsafe that, while here, we thrill and vibrate with the felt, the enjoyed presence of our Divine Creator and Saviour. Thou hast awakened in us this insatiable thirst for Thee ; and Thou alone canst satisfy this panting and anguishing desire in us to come into intimate touch with Thee. Oh, Thou all-illuming One, our darkness cannot engulf Thy light ; our weakness cannot baffle Thy strength ;

our callousness cannot resist Thy solicitude; our heartlessness cannot frustrate Thy love. Grant that we become cheerful, whole-hearted adorers of Thee in thought, word and deed. Teach us even with the soul-deep inspiration of Thine own holy presence; and admit us to blessedness in the endearing, exalting and enrapturing enjoyment of Thy fellowship. Bless us, we beseech Thee, and turn Thy countenance of mercy towards us, hungering and yearning souls. May we in this little gathering of co-pilgrims be enabled to feel this day that Thou hast been with us and that Thou wilt impart Thy truth and joy unto us! Blessed be Thy name!

Worship is of use, not when it is performed as mere duty, but only when it is done out of soul-hunger and a thirst from within. Such alone is the worship that is attended with a strong and genuine relish, producing good effects upon the lives of those engaged in it. There is, of course, the clock-like regularity of the Musalmans in their practice of *namaz*. But as the sole test of its practical value, the query arises—how many amongst them are being actually benefitted thereby in their daily lives? In fact, this is a criterion of universal applicability. And it suggests how paramount is the need to make sure that the spirit does not get to be hide-bound by tradition. For worship to retain its natural relish as also its proper efficacy, we have to see to it that it does not degenerate into a barely formal affair with the rigidity of an ever-uniform mould for all persons, moods and tenses.

This brings us to the topic of means and methods. The larger the diversities in worship, the more useful it is to come and join in it. On this score, the Brahmic form of worship, such as it is, is calculated to minister an uncommon measure of refreshment to the soul by reason of its freedom from the trammels of stereotyped routine. I doubt if there is any other congregation in the world which equally ratifies this standard of spontaneity and, along with it, of variety. The Mahammadans want such and such things alone to be said in their *namaz*. The Christians must take the name of Christ at every turn in their set liturgies. And the *sandhya-vandanam* of the orthodox Hindu covers the same recurring decimal for evermore.

At all events, the decline of relish for worship remains a sad fact of experience even in the Brahma Samaj. For my part, I confess I do not feel the same exhilaration when I attend a prayer-meeting now-a-days as I used to do once. That is, perhaps, because, for one thing, I expect much more now than before from the ministers conducting the services. Our demands are higher and larger; we want loftier things now. While allowing for these and similar new conditions, ample scope is yet left for us to reap some real benefit from the Samaj services which are not bad in themselves. And how? If any one utters at least one word from the bottom of his heart on such occasions, I appreciate it in full. When Bro. Balakrishna Rao garu conducts the service, it is not his ideas that appeal to me but his childlike cry to the Mother. Also, when the

congregation sings a hymn, I catch at some word and sometimes lose myself in it and do not follow the rest. For instance, there is the invocation to God as '*Manasa-mandira*'. If the Deity is to take His abode in the mind, oh, what must be the capacity, the receptivity and the sanctity of the mind itself!

Here is another aspect. The one weakness of popular, practical Hinduism till recently was the conception, all too circumscribed, that to live religion was the business of one class only. As against this view, religion in the Brahma Samaj is held to be the concern of every individual. Still, amid the busy life of these modern times, we of the Brahma Samaj also have, in effect, slipped into that old-world state of mind. Though unconsciously, we have been allowing the system of an exclusive priesthood to operate among us. The reality of religion and, as its essential concomitant or expression, the relish for worship are bound to remain only nominal things until every one seeks, to the best of his or her power, to understand religion and practise worship in his or her own self. If Brahmaism is worth anything, it must become the personal possession of each particular member. Then alone worship will come to be enjoyed by all.

Another circumstance that has to do with the growing disrelish for devotions is the disquieting fact that the spiritual strength of the Samaj has become dissipated by its settling down more or less into a social uplift or reform movement, if even so much as that. How

numerous the members who are associated with it more on account of its intellectual and social amenities than of their own spiritual needs!

How to improve matters, then ? This is the prime question before us now in the Samaj. Much certainly depends upon *abhyasam* and *sadhana*. The land must first be tilled. The showers will then descend. But, alas, this culture, this discipline, is more and more wanting in the Samaj!

XIV
CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP:
ITS CONDITIONS AND USES
(1929)

Here is gopi, first, and Krishna, next ; again, gopi and Krishna ; and so on ; and they form a circle. Furthermore, Krishna is at the centre ; and he plays on the flute. They dance all with Krishna and one with another. They rejoice the while in one another for the sake of Krishna. This is the Bhagavata idea of worship. In essence, it is really the ideal of all congregational worship. God is in the middle, pouring forth His rapturous love into all the worshippers, men and women. They in the entire ring rejoice in Him and also in one another for His sake. Thus, properly conducted, congregational worship takes us to the bed-rock of human unity which is a matter of more than companionship in the flesh though expressed and attested by that means. When Bassanio and Shylock meet first about the loan, the latter observes in the course of the conversation, "I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following, but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you." So there is, first, what we call business or secular life ; next, social life ; and, beyond these, convivial and spiritual life. Praying together, along with eating and drinking together—the kind of intercourse that the

zealot in the Jew vehemently forswears as too much to be extended to the heretic in the Christian—this constitutes the vital bond of spiritual affinity, rightly understood.

‘ If there is paradise anywhere on the face of earth, it is even here, even here, even here ’. So runs the inscription engraved upon the Fort of Agra. Lord Curzon is said to have recited that inscription when he entered a library. For our part, it becomes most appropriate for us to repeat it with full significance only as we enter a shrine of congregational worship each time. What is paradise? Someone has defined it as a place where the indwellers are seated face to face and not back to back. Yes; that is paradise in which we sit face to face with God as well as with one another, whatever the apparent incongruity about such simultaneous postures in the literal sense.

To realise the full measure of all-round benefit from common, conjoint worship, it is essential that the minister and the congregation should, throughout, essay to adjust themselves happily to each other in reciprocity of attunement and thus achieve the supreme end in view. All the good possible can be gained only when each member is cheerfully prepared and actively strives to put in his or her quota. How different this from the notion prevailing amongst us that the minister is to bear the brunt of the whole thing in congregational worship while the rest have no function of their own to fulfil except as ‘sleeping partners’! Each worshipper

in the congregation should, at the outset, compose himself devoutly for a few minutes to fall into line with the spirit of the solemn occasion. 'Everything that is unifying and harmonising—let it get into my being. And everything tending to divide and separate us, one from another—let it get out of me': this should be the course of self-preparation in the beginning. Then, as each hymn is taken up and finished, there should be a short interval in which to imbibe the spirit of that hymn by silently and intently meditating on its central thought. It cannot be too clearly borne in mind that the hymns are intended to bring home the right spirit again and again through the whole exercise of devotion. As to the aspect of mutual fellowship around the common Altar, we should recall and bring into application the underlying import of a truly noble social rule exemplified in numerous instances among all peoples. It is to the effect that if hospitality has once been shown to any one under a roof, no harm ought ever afterwards to be done to him or even contemplated against him under that roof although the man may turn out to be the vilest wrong-doer to the kind host himself. If hospitality in matters of mere pottage feeding lays such a sacred obligation on people, one may well imagine what the relations of forbearance and fraternity should be like—how inviolable, in one word—under conditions of mutual spiritual hospitality.

Altogether, congregational worship has its far-reaching value and validity on three sides, the spiritual, the moral and the social, each helping to bring the

rest into vivid relief and profound intensity. What is called *preethibhojan* or love-feast at the end is properly the social ratification and extension of the spiritual communion and the moral cooperation going before.

Doubtless, Rajah Rammohun Roy made a mighty contribution to the spiritual strength and wealth of Modern India when he introduced this congregational worship amid conditions of extreme self-centredness and touch-me-not-ism. It certainly marks the distinctive, the especial contribution of the Brahma Samaj to the spiritual evolution of this ancient land.

XV
OCCUPATION AND PREOCCUPATION
(1929)

There were two persons, each eagerly looking out to be favoured with a visit by God Almighty. One spread out his bed and strewed it with fragrant flowers. The other prepared delicious confections and kept them close by in readiness. And both waited on with tense expectancy. As it turned out in effect, a buffalo came along and rolled about upon the soft bed; while a dog turned up and ate away the sweet cakes. The point is : we are meant by God to learn to discern Him in His myriad forms and expressions and not necessarily in uncommon and supranormal phenomena. He makes opportunities, through a variety of ordinary incidents, of building up the right life in us. The capacity to witness His presence in all the little, commonplace occurrences of each day—that is the true test and measure of spiritual life. He is always within sight; but only rarely do we perceive Him. He is ever speaking; yet seldom is it that we hear Him. All that is because of our own preoccupations. So, these latter we should make only occupations in which His presence is felt. They ought not to divert and engross us as preoccupations only. How blessed we should be if God were suffered freely to grant us the grace to associate with Him as we went round from duty to duty!

The mad man now and then threatens people that he will go away from amongst them and that the moon will go away, too, with himself. And so it does appear to him to happen. Another man goes in the opposite direction ; and the moon seems to go with him as well. Like that, God goes with us in all directions. Yet, what lunatics we are to think He goes in only one direction ! His blessed presence is really with us in all occupations. Only, we must be able to present to Him the opportunities when we can see and hear Him. In meditation we do not go in search of the absent; we but drive away all counter-attractions and influences and place ourselves in an attitude of attentive hearing. Meditation thus practised proves to be no small aid to the growth of religious life. Our *sangat*, certainly, will be the happier for our giving a little time to silent meditation, which means undisturbed converse with God. As Muzoomdar has said, worship is not going out of ourselves ; but it is opening a door which remains closed while it is so fashioned as to open inside. Then, how marvellously intimate the intercourse we get into with God !

XVI
WORK AND WORSHIP
(1929)

*'Thasminpreethih thasyapriyakaryasadhanancha thas-
dupasanameva.'*

When Maharshi Devendranath said this, he was referring, in the terms '*thasmin*' and '*thasya*,' only to the God described by him in the earlier clauses of his *Brahmabeejam*. Here, therefore, arises no question of our human conception of good varying from time to time and thus presenting a difficulty as to what constitute acts really acceptable to God and equivalent to His worship. If I truly love such a God alone, my actions cannot be wrong. If the God of my worship is good, my own nature also must become good ; and, likewise, my volitions taking shape in actions must be good, too, on that account. Thus, there is at work the scientific principle of the spiritual magnetisation of souls. An iron magnetised necessarily acquires the properties of the magnet. Love means two or more persons becoming one in spirit—in mind and heart and will. If I ever did any deeds calling for condemnation, it means I did them only at a time when I was without true love for the true God. We have, further, to note the significance of the word '*sadhanancha*' in '*thasyapriyakaryasadhanancha*'. The formula does not enjoin merely

the doing of things acceptable to God but the continued *sadhana*, the sustained discipline, of doing such things. Then alone do the deeds performed become stepping-stones to the attainment of God in increasing love and worshipfulness. It is not simply understanding Him but loving Him—‘*thasminpreethih*’; and to love Him is to be transformed more and more into His own being. In fact, the two go together. You truly know a thing only when you become it. That is the requisite of worship. And that condition being satisfied, worship overflows into work, and work glows sanctified into worship.

XVII

SALVATION BY ABSORPTION

(1929)

You find in *The Silent Pastor* a striking sentence with a suggestive contrast. We are believers, says Mu-zoomdar, in absorption, not in annihilation. What does this signify ?

Broadly speaking, there are two schools of thought as regards the salvation and perfection of our true selves ; and both are generally denoted, though loosely, by the same term, namely, absorption. One is that of absorption by annihilation ; and the other that of absorption by transfiguration. According to the former, the individual empties himself into the universal. According to the latter, the universal so infuses itself into the individual that the individual becomes the mirror of the universal. Now, it is the second doctrine that is upheld before us, ruling out the first. From this point of view, salvation is the consummated process of self-realisation. The self-realisation is complete when there comes the complete experience that I am one with my God. Thus, what we call duality may be the duality of separateness or the duality of sameness in the sense of perfect likeness.

Among the Persians, a mystic poet, by name Farid-ud-din Attar, has an allegory in which he describes a

huge, far-off mountain, the abode of a mysterious seemurgh. The birds in the regions lower down say to themselves, 'Let us go and see it'. They start out ; but many drop off on the way across seven valleys. Only three keep up the flight and are at last received into the presence of the strange being on the mountain-summit. Then follows a long conversation. They say, 'We have at last come to you ; and we see we look so like you. What exactly are you ?' And the seemurgh replies, 'Well, then, I am you'. In the light of this fable, so long as you do not understand yourself, you ask, 'what is God ?' But once you come to understand yourself, you understand yourself also—or, rather, only — as one with God. Here, the capacity to commune with Him is not taken away. Only, it is so far developed that the consciousness of separateness becomes impossible.

We see this principle at work everywhere. So long as the child keeps drinking of the nectarine milk of the mother, it does not have a consciousness of separateness. The taste is so absorbing that the child forgets all else. The vital experience of receiving the milk and of enjoying the milk—this, however, is not taken away. Thought may not be ; but enjoyment there is. The more the thought, the less the enjoyment. The less the thought, the more the enjoyment. In one word, the realisation of the insignificance of the self — and, that way, also of its significance — is absorption. There is, say, a ball of lime. We put it in the fire. It becomes less and less distinctly visible as the flame grows stronger and stronger. Finally, it gets to be one with the white

heat, when nothing more of the red heat remains over. Then, we can no longer see it separately at all. All the same, it does exist there. This means it has received the entire heat into its innermost as well as outermost tissues so thoroughly as to become the same with the heat. Again, suppose we stand by the side of a stream which flows on and on without any hindrance. Then, we doubt whether it is stagnant or flowing water. We throw in a blade of grass ; and it moves visibly forward. Now, we recognise that it is only the appearance of flowing that has stopped in the case of the stream. And so, as Rabindranath reminds us in his *Sadhana* discourses, when the river flows into the sea, it does not cease to be a river, but it only continues to flow into the sea without a hindrance. Once more, when boys play at a top, you do not see the motion at all while the thing moves softest in what is called the sleeping state. It only means the motion is so triumphant over the earth's attraction that we no longer notice the influence of the latter. Lastly, you take a stick, put it in the fire and, after a while, begin to move it round. So long as you do so at a slow speed, you can see the stick as burning with the fire. But when you do so at the fullest speed, as at the circus show, you discern only a circle of fire.

XVIII
LIGHT *VERSUS* LOVE
(1929)

Thou art our dear and loving Divine Parent in the truest sense. Thou art our honoured, beloved and cherished Mother. With that sweetest and purest relationship as to the mother, we feel drawn closely and lastingly unto Thee. As the human mother feedeth and fostereth her little babe from the substance of her very person, so dost Thou, the Divine Mother, nourish our spirits with the very substance of Thy holy being. And this is so, not in the language of poetry, but in the plain, simple terms of real truth. Thy love, Thy Divine love, the depth of which none can measure, is the source and spring, the fountain and feeder, of the human race ; indeed, of the whole creation, of the entire round of existence. Such is the abundance of Thy love that, among the numberless millions of creatures, none is left wanting and none slipped into neglect. All — each and every one — are so directly and intimately present unto Thee. Yet our feelingless hearts, our dry, cheerless souls, fail to realise how, for Thy part and in Thy turn, Thou art ever present and ever eager with solicitude as the Parent of every one of us. The food of our bodies is Thine. The nourishment of our minds is Thine. The nutriment of our hearts is Thine. The

sustenance of our souls and of our all is Thine. And we come unto Thee, hungering and thirsting, hoping and trusting that, out of the treasures of Thy truth, wisdom, love and righteousness, Thou wilt surely feed each one of us, nourish the spirit in us and strengthen the whole being of us, that thus we may once again become like new-born children fresh from the heart of the mother. Do Thou keep out of us every thought and desire alien and unworthy; and so draw us with all the trustfulness of children to Thy holy self that we may receive the fullest blessing of Thy inspiring instruction on this occasion. We feel like children of one family gathered around the one parent, looking straight into the glowing face of the mother and protector, drawing so- face and strength, hope and joy, even from the heavenly look of that mother. May we be thus blessed on this occasion! Do Thou now and here render Thyself sweeter unto, and more intensely beloved of, us. This is our humble supplication; and our minds — our thoughts, aspirations and all — we place before Thee as our devoutest tributes due unto Thee. Do Thou, in Thy mercy and grace, bless these tokens of our love and devotion; and do Thou make us once again true and holy as Thy devotees, Thy worshippers and Thy adorers. Blessed be Thy name now and for ever!

We are all familiar with the story of Prahlada. Was there fault on either side in the family? We judge from a certain stand-point and say the great dissension was between the father's *thamas* (darkness) and the son's *jyothi* (light). But if we are just,

prepared to give credit to the father also for seeking to be firm in faithfulness to what he conceives, for his part, to be true, the struggle is at once seen to be, not between right and wrong in the absolute sense, but only between varying grades or scales of right. The conflict arises from the mutual bearings of the particular situation. I once witnessed a dramatic representation of Prahlada's story as developed by the late Bellary Krishnamachari garu. Narada repairs to Hiranyakasyapa ; he goes round and round the latter in salutation and says, ' Don't give up your point. Do stick to it'. Next, he sees Prahlada ; and Prahlada goes round and round Narada and is urged on in the same strain, ' Don't *you* give up your point.' Thus, the advice given to both father and son is one and the same. It is not that Narada is no more than the genius of merry mischief, stepping in only with a silly intent to breed differences. Rather, he comes to tell each severally, ' Follow the gleam of your own conscience. Fight out, live out, your truth ; and see that you achieve your end.' Now, in this situation, union can be brought about only by destroying the element of *aham* in the father. It is not he that is killed in the end but the ego in him. And with what result ? In the drama as I saw it enacted, the father ultimately comes round and blesses the son. ' Blessed are you, my son ! You have, in spite of my manifold obstacles, brought me face to face at last with Hari even by your unswerving conduct. Now am I one with you'. Thus there exist ever so many intermediate stages in the progress toward harmony. We may be unable readily to see or secure unanimity. Disagreements are

unavoidable stages. They can and will be made up as one understands another in due course.

There is a like episode in Rammohun's life. The father did not like the heterodoxy of the son. But it was more intensely hated by the mother. She persuaded her other sons to file suits against him in order to see him disinherited. But the feeling subsisted in her as to his real innocence. She wished later to go to Puri and live and die there according to her ideas of religion. When she was about to start, Rammohun affectionately pleaded with her, 'Why do you go so far away?' At last, she acknowledged how she knew that all he had been saying was true; and there was reconciliation between the mother and the son.

In the Brahma Samaj, how many members have not had to weep bitter tears for painful separation from kith and kin — all due to their own inconvenient yet inviolable sense of duty? On the one hand, Light says 'Go on'; and, on the other, Love says 'Stay on'. This is the tortured condition of many a Brahmo. But the truly religious, that is, spiritual-minded, man cannot long continue to disbelieve in evil customs and still follow them merely for the sake of near and dear ones. No real peace can be purchased on those terms. Goodness alone knows, in the case of humble people (so-called), how much of pain had or has had to be borne and endured by them at the hands of parents and other loving and loved ones. To refer briefly to just two strikingly inspiring instances within our own intimate circle. For Dr. Ramakrishna Rao, it will be thirty-four

years of widowed life three days hence. His wife died on the 25th of December 1895, soon after he had completed his nineteenth year. He was not eighteen and she was ten or twelve at marriage. When the bereavement occurred, I was away in Cocanada. There the news and the call came ; and I reached Masulipatam on the 27th December. His father was then talking very lightly, being full of proposals for a remarriage without delay/— 'old chimney gone, and a new one to be got ere long ; old shoe gone, only to be soon replaced by a new one' ! The old gentleman passed away in 1918. He never wasted one word upon the intractable son all those twenty years and more. The victim has silently suffered it all. And we all know how austere the life he lives, keeping pure the white flower of chastity by God's grace. Then, D. P. Bapaiah — what a beautiful life his was ! He was slowly dying of consumption attended with complications. He lost Rs. 12,000 in the Arbuthnot ^{Bank} crash. Deserted by his own and his wife's kinsmen, he was living in the hospital. I said, ' Bapaiah, so all your money is lost ! ' He replied, ' Well, what does it matter, sir ? I have a hundred rupees in the Savings Bank ; and that will keep me up for some time. If, by His grace, I get better, I will earn again for myself.' He had always a smile upon his countenance. He was always so subdued and gentle. His farewell words to P. Sitaramayya, when dying, were : ' Don't neglect the Samaj. Serve the Samaj ; and serve through the Samaj'. So he suffered for his convictions to the last moment.

K. T. Telang was a Justice of the Bombay High Court in his day. He was not a member of the Brahma

Samaj. He was a great and good man ; and he had very advanced views on social reform. But he got his daughter married in her ninth year. There was opposition. The excuse was, ' It has had to be done for the sake of a good old mother.' The answer was, ' So, for the sake of an aged mother's inclinations, you wouldn't think of the little child's interests ? ' Telang died of a broken heart six months later. At the memorial meeting then held, Ranade said, ' Telang has died as a sacrifice for the sake of reconciliation with custom as against conscience. This is how life is being shortened and careers cut short amongst us by the compromise of conviction'. Yes ; so it is. It is too true that even the length and vigour and happiness of our physical life depends upon the stern pursuit of the known ideal.

My first-born was a boy; and he died just one-and-half months after his birth. Pointing to me, my father said, ' His son is dead because of his revolt against God in joining the Brahma Samaj'. My father came and asked me to make a promise not to attend the Brahma Samaj any longer. My mind was sore-stricken with grief ; and I did not say anything. I did not eat that day at all. They turned to my wife and tried to persuade her to tell me not to go to the Samaj. She said, ' I don't want to tell him.' Then, my father said, ' I will leave home and go my way.' My poor mother felt torn within herself. She was in a dilemma as to whether to go away with the husband or to remain behind with the son. She showed great kindness to me, embraced me and said, ' Prahlada's story has come-

over into your homestead. What am I to do?' I softened and ate. Venkiah ran out and brought in some neighbours. My mother entreated me, saying, 'I don't want you to give up your faith. Only, give up going to the Samaj for some weeks'. Then raged some conflict within. In the end, I promised to do so. At once she went and said to my father, 'He will not go to the Samaj next week. Why be angry with him any more?' When persecution was again up in arms at home about attending the Samaj, I said to my wife, 'So they keep on harassing us like this in so many ways. Had we not better cease thinking of the Samaj?' And straight came the answer, 'I don't know; perhaps, you will do it. But I cannot.' Then I added, 'Oh, I never meant it seriously myself.' The relations between us and the elders of the family became worse and worse. God so designed it; and it could not be helped. My father was a Vaishnava. Pictures of Sri Krishna were in my room. While lying in it, I never put my legs to the side of those pictures, because they were my father's respected idols.

Rajah Rammohun Roy often saw religious processions being conducted through the streets with idols amid great pomp. He would shed hot tears on such occasions. 'How long, oh Lord, will my countrymen continue to be satisfied with these vain shows?' That was not because he believed himself superior. But his heart felt for those about him. An object of love and hope must evoke tears whenever he or she fails to rise to the standard of satisfaction of the one who loves

and hopes. As we know, Rajah Rammohun Roy, on the eve of his embarkation for Europe, went to Prince Dwarakanath Tagore's mansion to say goodbye, and placed his hand on young Devendranath's head and said, 'Brother, you are to succeed to my *gaddi*.' Now, whether it is so done or not in express action, the same thing is being repeated in the inner spirit. 'Every one amongst the youngsters shall be the successor to my *gaddi*.' It means that, with his prayers and efforts, the elder must strive and prepare the younger for the life to be lived and the work to be carried on. Whenever there is a new succession to the throne, people ask, 'Is he to be like the old king?' There is a stage of suspense always. There came a stage in Devendranath's spiritual progress when he asked himself, 'Shall I perform the funerals of my father as a true Brahmo, or shall I follow the old idolatrous custom?' In every religious career there do arise such crises and such vicissitudes with their ups and downs.

We are at last led to feel that it is not the actual presence of the struggle but the absence of a more intense struggle that one has to deplore.

XIX
FAITH AND TRUST :
HELPS AND HINDRANCES
(1929)

‘I have seen Him and known Him ; and I need ask for no proofs’ : this is faith. ‘ Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him ’ : this is trust—confidence sustained in despite of conflicting and disturbing elements. The vital relation between faith and trust is that the former begets the latter. ‘ *Thamasahpara-sthath*’ : how to pierce through the besetting darkness and reach forth the vision to a knowledge of the Light that shines beyond ; how to advance from the faith of tradition and hearsay to the faith of direct vision and immediate knowledge ; and how to preserve unimpaired, amid the cares and crosses of the world, the blessedness of implicit trust in the unfailing providence of God—this is the one practical problem of true spiritual life.

And it is a problem for all the children of men. We are generally apt to imagine that, as God chooses His own elect ones for His manifestation from time to time, only certain outstanding persons are charged from on high with the aforesaid mission of faith and trust. But the fact is that, as every entity and every event has its own appointed place in the scheme of

creation, so tremendous is the responsibility laid upon each individual, never so humble, in the matter of realising, and witnessing to, the ideal of faith and trust.

Of course, faith and the trust born of faith are, primarily, the gifts of Grace (*Prapaththi*) pure and simple. Even the awakening of the disposition and the maintaining of the determination in that direction in the human are strictly to be recognised as part of the workings of grace in the Divine. Yet inestimable is the aid derivable from the 'Cloud of Witness' that

'solemnly advances,
Widening as each clarion-call is hushed in Death below'
—the heartening testimony of the growing body of the Faithful of all times and climes. And so it is that 'On God and Godlike men we build our trust.' Still more, in the home department, so to say, of the individual himself, a reverent examination now and again of the inner as well as the outer course of one's own life cannot but serve as a mighty feeder of both faith and trust. It is too true that, as familiarity breeds contempt, it is the very fact of the ceaseless doing of wondrous acts in us by God that goes to make us indifferent to Him. The beat of the heart remains unheard and unthought of, so long as that most vital of all the organs continues to function normally in the healthiest state.

Thus we are led to perceive how many and manifold are the mental and moral illusions that have got to be destroyed by increased knowledge of the ways of

God. Difficulties in faith and trust arise chiefly because we are only too prone to prejudge God out of our impatience. Imaginary difficulties apart—and it is for us assiduously to enlighten and educate ourselves out of them—difficulties, so far as they are real, are, indeed, there with a warrant even as wholesome tests and trainers of spiritual strength. Also, after all, our difficulties multiply mainly because we want to share in others' happiness and not in their sorrow—an attitude distinctly opposed or contrary to the cosmic scheme of things. Accordingly, the lack of faith and trust operates not only as the cause but also as the effect of the lack of study of God's ways, on the one hand, and the lack of service to God's will, on the other.

The sheet-anchor of faithful trust and trustful faith is ultimately the assured conviction of consciousness, grounded in personal experience, that even when I was passing through the bitterest of trials and tribulations, my God never did desert me but was again and again sustaining me and was even reproducing Himself in me.

XX
INEQUALITIES IN CREATION
(1929)

Variety is the law of nature.

The several particles of the globe, from the smallest of the small to the biggest of the big, all cohere and form the globe. The force called cohesion holds them together. The small particles are necessary for the big, and the big equally so for the small. Each part always complements or supplements the rest.

Such is the case in the world of humanity also. The patient is as necessary for the doctor as the doctor is for the patient. God points out to the patient that he should go to such and such a doctor, if his illness is to be cured. He also instructs the doctor that he should go to such and such a patient, if he wants to have his skill developed or made use of in a worthy manner. Thus, God acts as the propelling and the combining force in both patient and doctor. Just such is the relationship, likewise, between the teacher and the pupil, the rich and the poor, the giver and the taker, the master and the servant, the high and the low, and so on. Only as men are placed in different stages of advancement does each man's struggle serve as a suggestion and a stimulus to others. The law

man and the blind man supply each what is wanting in the other; so much so that they form one unit, the former leading the latter and the latter carrying the former. Thus we seem to be welded together through the very limitations under which each one of us has to strive on in this world.

There can be richness only when there is variation; and this is plainly essential to growth in harmony. The sixteen notes struck up on a musical instrument are indispensable for the desired effect in symphony. The purposive accord in question is the unitive accord which knits together the twelve strokes, one to twelve, that are sounded by the pendulum in the clock, though seemingly as so many variants separated one from another.

XXI
RECEIVERS AND TRANSMITTERS IN ONE
(1938)

It is remarkable how Jesus enjoins the offering of prayer in the individual's private closet and yet it begins with '*Our Father*'. The point is that spiritual culture yields no real good unless and until we progress from 'I' and 'Me' to 'We' and 'Us'. So, Miss Underhill points out that growth is both vertical and horizontal—vertical, as derived direct from God; and horizontal, as spreading sideways towards fellow-men. Thus we are to be both receivers and transmitters.

APPRECIATIONS
AND
REMINISCENCES

I
RAJAH RAMMOHUN ROY*
(1933)

Thou that art not only the Ordainer of the destinies of nations but the very Pilot at the helm along the eternal voyage of the whole creation — *Bhavambodhipotham*, as we call Thee ! We feel we are in that ark of hope, in that bark of providential guidance, of which the direction is sure and in which the success of the voyage is eternally guaranteed. Unto Thee we turn with trustful and reverent souls on this solemn occasion with the fervent supplication that Thou shouldst guide us as we humbly endeavour to realise the significance of these celebrations. If, as we believe, it is Thy urge within that has brought us together ; if, as we feel assured, it is Thy spirit that dwelt in Rammohun and revealed Thy glory in that marvel of a man, then, we may trust and feel confident that Thou wilt guide us in our humble endeavour to trace Thy purpose and rejoice in Thy mercy as manifested in him. May we have the soul that is ever hospitable to the light of God and the heart that is ever open to the love of God, so that, illuminated by that light and hallowed by that love, we may, by Thy grace, feel, realise, appreciate and rejoice in, the

*From the Presidential chair at Brahmopasana Mandir, Cocanada, on the occasion of the central Centenary Celebrations for Andhradesa (1-10-33).

message that is to be delivered from this place with one convergent purpose, albeit through divers voices—each and all designing to discover the virtue and the grace that are significant of the life of Rammohun. Be with us and guide us. Blessed, blessed be Thy name !”

Sisters and Brothers,

This is the closing day of the solemn celebrations which, as you are aware, have been so far conducted in a reverent spirit — not in a mere routine fashion but in a manner calculated to kindle a new enthusiasm in us. And therefore, it behoves us to endeavour to go through the function of this evening, not as the refrain of a sinking strain but as the climax of a swelling symphony. Let us attune ourselves to the sirit of God with the prayer that He will fill us with a fuller measure of reverential esteem for Rammohun, not for his sake but for God's own sake, which alone was the parent source of that purposeful life.

Now, here we have the list of representative speakers. I would, with your permission, adopt a slight variation both by way of change in order and of addition to suit the immediate requirements of the occasion. Before we have the benefit of the several addresses, I shall invite your attention for a moment to the sheet in your hands that you may, with that spirit of intense reflection which the subject demands and justifies, peruse that sublime hymn which, as tradition has it, sprang forth from the adoring soul of Rammohun Roy as he first set forth on British soil. It is itself in the Bengali

language. But its correct and complete meaning has been sought to be conveyed both in prose and verse in the rendering below. You will, I pray, endeavour to catch the inmost spirit of that song. For in it is the essence of the faith that dwelt in, and the ideal that impelled, Rammohun. 'Be it in the native land or on the foreign shore, everywhere I shall be in direct vision of Thy immediate presence. I feel it is Thou that art guiding me; and this whole universe is a marvel of Thy grace. Filled with this assurance, I shall never feel myself alone and distant from Thee'. The late Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar, M.D., C.I.E., the greatest physician in the Calcutta of his day and one of the most stalwart of souls in promoting true progress, rightly observed that nowhere in the whole record of man could be found a chant so sublime in its vivid realisation of the universal presence of God and, therefore, in its assured sense of the companionship of that Divine presence. Yes; it were no easy thing to find a parallel to match this chant in the entire annals of man's devotion. I lay stress upon this, because I should, in my own understanding, think of interpreting every one of the coming speeches as elucidative of that faith and that experience in one form or another.

Before I close, let me dwell on only one point. Again and again, we have had it stressed in so many ways during these three or four days that Rammohun's spirit was universal. It is that universality of his soul that will find expression once more through the various speakers of this evening. In the latest issue of *The Modern*.

Review, the Editor notes how these Centenary celebrations are or will be solemnised all over this land and also by not a few Non-Indian nationalities elsewhere. There, then, is the proof of, and justification for, Dr. Sir Brojendranath Seal's designation of Rammohun as a universal man. But it is not alone because his memory is being solemnised all over that it necessarily follows that Rammohun is a universal man. There is much more than this in it : he saw the impress of the Universal Being everywhere all through the universe. To see the immanent spirit of the Universal God in the minutest monad and in the sublimest star—that is the true universal outlook. And by it Rammohun was moved, not as faith but as vision and experience, in perceiving the Universal Spirit everywhere. But while it is the common saying of philosophers that God is everywhere and therefore God is in this or in that particular object also, the truth apprehended by the really great universal spirits is that, as God is everywhere, so this or that is in God and not simply that God is in this or in that. The universal man finds the Universal Being enveloping all, environing all, including all in Himself, leaving no room and no leakage for any to lie outside His ambit. As to God being present even in the finite self with all its limitations and grossnesses, the All-purifying One can and does include and comprise them all, not by becoming reconciled to them as they are, but by assuring their transformation into His purity. So, in effect, it is not so much that God is in me as that I am in God ; I can never go outside the circuit of God. It is from this standpoint that we shall be able

properly to construe to ourselves the message of him whom we are here to honour by this evening's commemoration.

(After the speech of Moulana Abdul Hyder Saheb of Narsapur)

When Rammohun Roy was studying Arabic, he found it a most inspiring feature that every section of the Koran began with 'In the name of the All-compassionate One, Lord of all the worlds.' It is essentially through the common realisation of this supreme truth about Allah, Jehovah or Brahma that the knotty problem of Hindu-Moslem unity can at all reach its permanent and fruitful solution. Then and then alone will the two communities be as two hands within one clasp. When once the inner spirit of each is appreciated and assimilated by the other, there will be no quarrel. Ali and Hassan were two brothers living in two separate parts of the same house. Ali had his wife and children, while Hassan had no children but only a wife. Each would go to the other's farm and help forward his work, unobserved, by night. 'My brother has a family; I must contribute my share of labour to their upkeep'—such was Hassan's anxiety. 'My brother has his wife alone; and he will have to go home early. Hence I must prove of use to him'—so Ali would reflect.

It is said Rammohun lived as a Hindu, dressed as a Mahammadan, and resided in a bangalow as a Christian would do—a synthetic conjunction of personal

habits typical of a deeper and higher harmony. Born a Hindu, robed with the lore of Islam and entering into the culture and civilisation of Christianity—that was Rammohun; and that is the picture we have before us to appreciate and follow in its significantly spiritual aspects.

(After the speeches of Messrs. P. Bhadriah, M. A., L. T., and M. V. V. K. Rangachari, B. A.)

To understand Rammohun aright in his fulness and completeness, I believe we have to take the last two speakers as complementary to each other. I do not quarrel with the description of Rammohun as an 'atheist.' After all, the difference between 'theist' and 'atheist' is only in one letter—*a*! If by 'atheist' is meant an iconoclast, Rammohun was an atheist committed to the destruction of all barriers between God and man. If an 'atheist' is one who tells the world there is no real division between East and West, Rammohun was an atheist. If 'atheist' stands for one who dares to declare, 'The architecture of my soul is in my hands and rests not upon the grace of another', then, Rammohun was an atheist. If you hold that because a man is born in a particular religion, if he goes against its traditions in any respect, he becomes an 'atheist' then, Rammohun was an atheist. Why not? He who was a 'believer' on one bank of the river Danube, was a 'blasphemer' on the other bank in the days of the great European Reformation. 'Infidelity for the infidel: let him have it! Faith for the faithful:

let him have it ! The ache of the heart : this is what Attar wants'. What really counts, then, is that ecstatic anguish of the inmost spirit which makes one feel, 'How insignificant I am and how transcendent God is !' Says a Persian poet : ' I am a Kaffir as being a believer in, and an aspirant after, Divine Love alone. For me, Islam is not necessary'. Likewise, when every nerve of the Brahmin's body has become a 'sacred thread', where still is the necessity in him for the 'sacred thread' so called ? Certainly, Rammohun Roy was an 'atheist," if you please, in the sense that he pulled down the ancient gods. He was an iconoclast ; but his very removal of idols was done in a truly sacramental spirit.

(After the speech of Mr. J. Purushottam, M. A.)

It is a matter for thankful acknowledgment, as it is also a source of genuine and gratifying encouragement, to have it stated thus by a thoughtful and wide-awake Non-Brahmo observer that the study of the Upanishads, as a matter of fact, is to be found more popularly and profitably cultivated within the Brahma Samaj than in the larger Hindu community without. As the history and the literary output of the Samaj amply bear out, the Upanishads as well as the other two Institutes of the *Prasthanathraya* have, since the days of Rajah Rammohun Roy, commanded reverent, if critical, recognition as precious repositories of Divine wisdom. It is too true that national redemption cannot be achieved without Western culture, as India is circumstanced at present. But this by no means implies the elimination of

our own indigenous culture. Unto us, Rammohun constitutes the stream into which flow together both the Oriental and the Occidental currents of culture.

(After the speeches of Messrs. P. Subbarayudu, Ch. L. Narasimha Rao, B. A., and P. Ramaswamy, M.A.)

I am in perfect accord with the spirit of all that the last speaker has said. I may be permitted, however, to make two observations. One is with reference to Mr. Rangachari's claim, already touched upon by me, that Rajah Rammohun Roy was an atheist. As against this, we need not go the length of saying in the language of Keshub Chunder Sen, 'Rather cut our throats than call us atheists'. After all, Mr. Rangachari's remark was half a joke. He meant that a man is as readily called an atheist as anything else by society at large, if only he sets himself up against it at any point! When I was at Ellore, I wrote to Rev. Mr. Brown, the Head and Manager of the Mission High School I then served in, that I would like to spend a half-hour with him in quiet, friendly converse about the things of the spirit. Somehow, after we had been together for a while, Mr. Brown seriously said, 'Is not Max Muller an atheist?' 'Yes, sir,' I answered, '*atheist* is a word which is a double-edged weapon. There are some who call others atheists just to black-ball them. And those who thus seek to give themselves credit for being theists are not 'cut-throats' by any means!' As Bradlaugh was in his time, as Ingersell was in his time, so was Rammohun an utter non-conformist. If for that sin others will give

him that particular name, we are to take it that it is just the world's way. Mr. Rangachari could not have meant that Rammohun was an atheist at all in the correct sense of the word. Rammohun, of course, was a rationalist in so far as he declared in substance, 'I accept nothing unless justified to my reason'.

The other remark of Ramaswamy which calls for a passing notice is the one directed against Bhadriah. It is a case of misunderstanding. Bhadriah, in denying that Rammohun was a prophet, never meant to imply, 'Away with all prophets.' For, in his own way, he asked, 'Is not my master a prophet?' According to popular understanding, the voice of the prophet must be accepted as the seal of infallible truth never to be questioned. In that sense, the Brahma Samaj owns no prophets. But it does accept all prophets in a new spiritual sense. It cannot say it accepts one or two; it has for its own the communion of all the prophets. While I fully agree with Ramaswamy as to his standpoint, I think this much of explanation is due in appreciation of Bhadriah's real meaning.

Now, there is this common, outstanding characterisation of Rajah Rammohun Roy as the type of the universal man. When we say 'type' and lay emphasis upon it, it is not that he is the only universal man to whom in process of time all should gradually approximate. All that the term stands for is that we should be doing injustice to Rammohun Roy, if we confined our appreciation of him only to the religious

aspect. His life was so variegated, so multifarious, in extent that only by the assemblage of all those ramifications does he or any one become a universal man. If we speak of a universal principle, we mean it finds expression in all the issues of life. Truth is a universal principle. Therefore, it is not that we should confine its signification to truth-speaking. We mean, rather, that Truth in all respects is the eternal model in nature to which it is for man to conform. Truth in speech is that which makes the speaker's meaning manifest beyond doubt. So Truth in silence means that the attitude of silence you assume should not be misleading as to your real intent. And so on, we have the application of Truth to all the concerns of life. That way, Rammohun was the type of the universal man—one in whom there was effected a synthesis of religious cults and cultures, social ideals and activities and all the far-reaching issues of human progress. When we say the sun is the universal source of light, it does not mean that on that account we must put out all lights but that, whether it be the earthen lamp in the hovel or the glorious display of electric light in the palace, all are traceable to the sun; and were there no sun, there could be no such reflections of light at all. Similarly, in regard to beauty, true beauty is beauty in the whole outlook upon life such as stimulates a new rapture in the soul. Rammohun as a unifier does not represent any one particular purpose like that of 'Demolish Caste' or 'Abolish the British Government'. He is the type of the universal man to be studied by all individuals, nations and denominations

who would view life from all standpoints whose outlook varies. If they just wanted to bring out the spirit in their divers views and vistas, they should go to Rammohun and his spirit. 'Rammohun as a universal man' means that unto his soul was vivid the vision of a Universal Spirit pervading the universe. As the English poet says, herein lies the profundity of mystic vision—to see a world in a grain of sand and behold infinity in the palm of a hand and eternity itself in an hour. A reeling drunkard, returning home from his revelry at midnight, heard the clock strike twelve on his way along the street. He counted the strokes—one, two, three, four and so on up to twelve. And he exclaimed, 'Why on earth does it not give them all in one?' The besotted intellect of the man failed to see that all the strokes really had been given in one, even as twelve became one idea alone in him as he counted. That is universality of mind which sees through all one only truth and one single continuity of purpose : not counting each by itself but taking note of each, transcending all and reaching a conglomerate of integral parts ; each an entity yet all unified — not absorbed but amalgamated. The universal man is he unto whom there is nothing of extraneous matter, nothing of a by-product, in the whole concern of the cosmos but all enter organically into the one composite whole of a universe. As the poet puts it in *Akbar's Dream*, this is the prevailing condition of things : the rose says to the other flowers, 'I am the only flower worth the name' ; the mango says to the other fruits, 'I am the one supreme fruit'. But God's diadem, the crown of glory of the Lord of the

universe, takes unto itself all the gems and jewels of the mental, moral and spiritual upgrowth of man all over. God finds His kingdom not in the past nor in the present, not in the East nor in the West ; but it embraces all, controls all, blesses all and perfects all. It is this universal Kingdom of God that Rammohun, in his own way and according to his own prophetic view, wanted and strove to see established all over the world. 'Brother, ours is universal religion', he would often declare to his fellow-believers with tears in his eyes. Not that he would raise barriers and isolate himself; but he wanted to show how there is that in each faith, however superstitious, which has the eternal in it ; else it would never have come into being. No human soul ever rested in a religion absolutely temporal. In everything, there is an element, a principle, of eternal truth — that eternal truth which was in the conception of the Designer even in beginningless time. Rammohun's concern was to go and apply himself to it and say to everyone, 'You have also a place in the Divine scheme of things and you can worship the Deity ; you are a denizen of the universal Kingdom of God'. Those are not conflicting but divergent conceptions when we say, 'God is in this', and, again, 'This is in God'. Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, as he attained his great transfiguration of soul, said — 'All others have said God indwells all. But I envelope all with God.' It constituted the universal aspect of Rammohun's faith that he would go into every concern of life with a spiritual eye which found even in every physical object a divine purpose. The late Rao Bahadur Madhusudan Rao of Cuttack had a brass

tumbler out of which he took drinking-water. Upon it, he had, engraved in Uriya, the characters '*Jal dehi Kripamai.*' A friend pointed to it as one of the oddities of that great devotee. But, in truth, each time water was poured into it, it became a sacrament — the visioning of God the All-giver. As the smith forges, as the carpenter shapes, so the potter works a miracle of beautiful form out of dull clay; and therein is creative power alive to God. Universal religion is not confined to any vocation. All drudgery becomes delight and even divine delight, when permeated with the Spirit of God. As Emerson said, 'Hitch your waggon to a star', Rammohun let his whole life be pervaded by the Universal Spirit. So the vital lesson to be learnt from it is that nothing is secular, vulgar, profane in the whole round of existence and experience; but all is the chant, of one psalm. Whether in the temple or at the office, at the work-table or on the sport-field, in the solitude of contemplation or amid the hilarity of company, it is all God. The story goes that Rabbia, the female saint among the Sufis, was lying ill. A number of friends gathered about her and wondered, 'It is a puzzle why a saintly woman should be tortured like this'. One observed, 'God tests our faith that way.' Rabbia said, 'Go further'. Another urged, 'We must endure these crosses as the ordinances of God'. And a third sought to improve upon the second by his own different account. Finally, they all turned to Rabbia with the query, 'Now, your solution for the riddle?' Then said she, 'Why, I never ask myself these questions. If I am to say God is with me in health, why not also in sickness? If in happiness, why not also in sorrow?

Are we not perfected into God through sorrow ?' So universal faith is that which endures — continues to remain unaffected and even becomes intensified — through the varied experiences of life. An earthquake has come and shattered a whole island. Thirty thousand bodies have been swallowed up and engulfed in it. We could not be men, if we did not feel for them. At the same time, we should not be children of God, if we could not bring ourselves to say, 'They are gone to their God'. Referring to the 'deadly grief' over the murder of his wife and children, Macduff is urged by Malcolm to 'dispute it like a man'. 'I shall do so ; but I must also feel as a man', answers Macduff. Yes ; because the facing is of God's granting ; and so is the feeling also of His imparting. God both ordains and sustains. He is universal as pervading all, as enveloping all, as well as abiding in each. And He abides in His infinite perfection in each atom — *anoraneeyan*, not dwarfed into the atom now and bulging out of it then. Rather, as Emerson has it in sublime verse, the whole is there ; the whole is taken out of the whole, and yet the whole remains ; it cannot be depleted any time. That is the secret of creation. God abides unchanged and yet promulgates all change in and through self-manifestation. Therefore it is that I know Him and yet do not know Him. That is the universal aspect of particulars. So says Tennyson :

" Flower in the crannied wall,
 I pluck you out of the crannies ;
 Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
 Little flower — but if I could understand

What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is."

To understand the nature of the little flower is to understand the whole universe to be an organic unity. This Rammohun Roy realised, as very few do. There are compartments : some people's compartments are very big, and others' are very narrow. But the universal man, the man of God, finds no compartments ; to him the universe is an organic whole. Astronomers tell us that the stars are so far off that it takes two hundred years for their light to travel down to us. That is viewing things through the inverted telescope ! If the star-light comes into my eye soon or late, how is it distant from me ? It and myself form one twin expression of the same thing. You say the sun-beam takes eight minutes to cover 1,86,000 miles. That is all good. But, really, if the sun ultimately, aye, constantly comes to me and knocks at my door, far is near to him who sees the whole universe as an organic reality unlike the man who is cribbed, cabined and confined in his own petty self. Accordingly, Rammohun was a universal man in all directions, as exemplified again and again. When he stopped away from an important public pre-engagement out of unhappiness over the failure of the Neapolitan struggle against the yoke of Austria and, again, when he gave a public dinner in the Town Hall of Calcutta out of gladsome enthusiasm over the establishment of constitutional government in Spain, was Rammohun merely an Indian, an individual, a man of his own time or race alone ? Was he not, on the other hand, a universal man into whom there

flowed tributaries of an affectional realisation of the solidarity of the human race from all quarters? Let us realise that aspect. The universal man alone can talk of universal religion. Suppose one brings you a rose. It comes with thorns. And if you wish to enjoy it, you do not say, 'They are inevitable; and I accept them'. But you only say, 'My admiration is focussed on the rose, not as a material substance, but as a pilgrim entering into my soul'. Unto the universal man, all are essential factors, integral parts, of one and the same whole. A Persian poet says: every flower, every green leaf, is a page in the record, a sheet in the script, of God's glory. Then, confronted with the reminder, 'You have forgotten the thorn,' he adds, 'Unto me the thorn is the index-finger pointing to God'. So, not merely the fragrant flower but even the pricking thorn is pervaded by God unto him who is the type of the universal. When we say he has no sorrows and no joys, we really mean, not that he has been petrified, but that he has been sublimated. For unto him all experiences are alike reminders of God: sorrows are trials meant to become stepping stones to God; and joys are invitations to render the heart's homage to God. Not merely in the day-light but in the depths of darkness does God exist. One of Margaret Gatty's Parables from Nature illustrates how light is here with us both to guide and to warn: the lantern guides; and the will-o-the-wisp warns. 'Don't you swallow me'; says the Glow-worm to the Nightingale, 'God has sent you and me for the cognate mission of guiding man along his pilgrim path—you by your song and I by my light.' It is this universality of outlook in

Rajah Rammohun Roy that cannot be too clearly or too fully realised by us. We find not one department of life which lay outside the range of his interest, not merely for passive sympathy, but for active inspiration. We show our appreciation of prophets, said Carlyle, by persecuting them, if not by killing them ! But, thank God, as Rabindranath only recently observed, Rammohun is just coming to his own.

II
RAJAH RAMMOHUN ROY*
(1931)

HYMN — *Jayahey, jayahey, Bharatabhagyavidhatha*
(Bengali)

Thou the great Ordainer of the destiny of Mother India, Thou art the ancient One of days and yet the fresh-revealed and the newly-welcomed God of each dawn. And as we sing this matin-song of a new dawn for our mother-country, we feel thrilled with gratitude and enjoy the delight of a new life quickening the dead bones of the valley and the fresh spring smiling with the joy of a recurrent hope in every downcast heart. Thou that art the parent Source and the prime Fountain not only of life but also of light and love, Thy eternal purpose, unfolded through successive generations, makes it patent unto our minds and hearts that in Thy keeping are the destinies of nations and of individuals; and we are assured once again, in the history of our fatherland that Thou art for ever shaping and directing the destinies and energies of our own dear country. And the self-same thought and hope are brought home this evening to our minds with impressive vividness and to our hearts with thrilling joy. Assembled as we are here to dwell with reverent yet thoughtful reflection on the life.

*Presidential remarks at the ninety-eighth death-anniversary celebrations in Brahmopasana Mandir, Cocanada (27-9-31).

and the mission of Rajah Rammohun Roy, the supreme lesson that they, by Thy grace, have through a century been rendering unto India—the gospel of grace that through the ages one unending purpose runs and the minds of men are being enlarged and their souls sanctified with the process of the suns—is once again brought home to us. For this we render our thanks unto Thee. May that lesson be impressed upon our minds and hearts through the discourses which Thy servants are to treat us to in exposition and illumination of that great career! Vouchsafe Thy light to them and the spirit appropriate to the occasion to us that, thus, soul speaking to soul, we might together, unitedly and rejoicingly, feel within us the sanctifying presence of Thy Holy Spirit. Blessed be Thou and Thy name now and for ever! *Om! Thatth Sath!*

OPENING REMARKS

Friends,

Bearing in mind what my pupil, Ramaswamy, has said — that he not only proposed me to the chair but decided that I should occupy it before I rendered an answer, I trust I successfully make an appeal to your sense of justice when I say I am here to fill the chair and nothing more. A friend of mine, now a Member of the Government of Madras, used to say of another Member that he would never talk without a 'but' here and a 'but' there. My purpose in referring to it is to observe that I am not without my own 'but' in the present context. I confess the fact that Rajah Rammohun Roy is unto my reverent heart an interminable subject upon which I have time and again spoken during

forty years; *but*—but I have not touched the fringe of it. It will not be impossible for me to speak again on my favourite theme, though I cannot undertake to determine to what purpose. Just as a great river, a lofty hill, a shining star or a moving poem can never exhaust its influence upon the feeling heart, I feel that he who is, on all hands, recognised and honoured as the Father of New India can always furnish unto the mind dwelling upon that ever-fertile topic food for further reflection and material for further exposition. I shall not attempt anything like a detailed dissertation on Rajah Rammohun Roy. I shall be content with just two or three remarks.

In his recent work on the Prophets of New India, that eminent French savant, Romain Rolland, makes certain observations about Rajah Rammohun Roy. One of these is this—that that remarkable personage ushered in a new era in the spiritual history of Asia and was really the first cosmopolitan in India. Now, this observation can be amplified in different directions. What is the new era that he ushered into the spiritual history of this continent? And how, in view of that new era, does he become the first true cosmopolitan in India? That he ushered in a new era is admitted on all hands. But most of those that characterise this new era do not lay emphasis upon the fact that it was concerned with the spiritual history of Asia. A stout-hearted fighter for freedom; a doughty champion of the female sex; one moved by the ideal of unity; a great linguist—Rammohun might be all these. But these need not argue a

Spiritual element in him at all. The freedom he loved might be of limb or of mind. His championship of the sex of his mother and sister might relate to the desired emancipation of a half of India for the sake of social humanity. Again, his vast scholarship might, like many another's, fail to reach the region of the spirit. Yet, most people admire Rammohun Roy and hold him in honour, because he was a great fighter for the freedom of his country; there are some who also esteem him as one who made a strenuous effort at a comparative study of religion; some marvel at the versatility of his genius. All this might be true. But few take hold of the fact that, in its essential element, his new message is the message of the spirit. In one of the poems composed by an admirer in the West after Rammohun's death, the message of this prophet was summed up in one term: 'Nations, behold your God; rejoice, rejoice'. This was the spiritual element in Rammohun's message — inviting, not individuals, not isolated nationalities, but all nations into one fraternity to behold their God, not with the heart throbbing with fear, not with the mind puzzled over mystery, not with the conscience honouring the oracle within, but with the soul rejoicing over the vision ahead. He who has hitherto been either uplifted beyond the reach of ordinary capacity or enlarged into the immensity of vague vastness has been brought down to be dear and near to all; and so, behold Him and rejoice, because He is the God, not merely of wisdom, still less of power, no, not only of holiness, but of *anandam*, bliss. Rejoice in Him, oh ye nations; and as you rejoice in Him, you cannot but rejoice in one

another; and they who rejoice in Divinity become the children of Divinity and receive the Divine element. Thus has Rajah Rammohun Roy told the nations that they have been placed on the face of the globe, not to parcel it out in internecine warfare and irreconcilable competition, but to share it as the common heritage of the whole of human kind, giving and receiving with the readiness and cheerfulness of brother towards brother. The end and aim is, never to drudge under the weight of a feelingless fate, not even to fight with the might of science the forces arrayed against man, but to receive the gift of life from the God of *Anandam*. He who does this cannot but make his whole environment also joyous. It would be an unthinkable and self-destructive process, if a person should rejoice while there went forth from him only sorrow to others.

‘Nations, behold your God and rejoice’. That was the message Rammohun brought to this country and to humanity at large. In facing it from another viewpoint, Rolland observes that Rammohun sank his ploughshare into the soil of India and his sixty years of labour left that India thoroughly transformed. So Rammohun ‘transformed’ India. It is one thing to mutilate; it is another thing to transform. The latter must mean bringing a new message, infusing a new strength, imparting a new light and in every way instilling a new purpose and outlook. That song of Dr. Tagore with which we began recites how into the outlook of every Indian there now comes the whole vastness of India from the eternal Himalayas to the ever-sounding Comorin. We

think now of 'All-India'—her rivers with their baptismal billows; her peoples with their many tongues but conjoint hearts; and so on: one family, one fraternity. This transformation Rajah Rammohun Roy achieved for us through sixty years of labour. His conception of a United India which, in its spiritual aspect, is defined and programmed in the Trust Deed of the Brahma Samaj, was, says Rolland, a conception so vast and fruitful that a century has hardly sufficed to prove it and lay bare its significance. Thus it is that we in our day have yet not outgrown the provincialism which comes of habit — '*our* Bengali', '*our* Tamil', '*our* Andhra'. To Rammohun these were so many little plots into which the vast paradise of God has been divided, not for the purposes of fight and dismemberment, but for the conjoint yet varied and therefore rich cultivation of the whole ground to yield the full fruit of thought and sentiment, will and aspiration, hope and joy. Then shall the Punjabee unto the Madrasee be the very kith and kin, the soul's nearest brother. And inspired by this spirit of Rammohun under the influence of the new era, we shall so enlarge ourselves as to learn to think in terms of a complete India, nothing but a full India.

CLOSING REMARKS

The characteristic of Religion is that it is ever new and yet eternally old, because Religion is the realisation of God in the life of man. The Object to be realised is infinite and eternal; and the being endeavouring to realise it is endowed with capacities to the expansion

of which no limit can be set. As Emerson has said, our life consists of two circles—the eye and the horizon; and life is the interrelation between these two circles, the eye being trained more and more to survey the ever-increasing reaches of the horizon. In the field of Religion lies the possibility of the endless growth and expansion of the spirit in the contemplation and under the inspiration of the Oversoul. In this consists true spiritual progress through God unfolding Himself to man. Accordingly, while there is the unbroken continuity of God's message delivered through the souls of the prophets, the spiritual expansion of man can never be identically the same from generation to generation. Of this endless and ever-varying process of the soul's evolution which we call spiritual, progressive religion, Rajah Rammohun Roy, endowed, as Rolland has said, with the wonderful capacities of a man of gigantic personality, stands before us as India's great representative in the modern world. Rammohun's own characterisation of his message is in terms of the modern spirit. The distinction here lies in this, that in pre-modern conditions man's interests had to be limited to particular aspects alone as conducive to his welfare; the rest he should eschew as detrimental to growth. The modern dispensation, on the other hand, consists in the evolution of both knowledge and sentiment; for there can be nothing to be rejected as irrelevant to, and not required by, man. All that man has ever felt interesting has an integral relation to his growth. Every branch of knowledge and every aspect of activity, therefore, should be assembled and unified into the great purpose

and the ultimate object of man. Under the modern spirit, unto which nothing that has ever interested any intelligent group of human beings can remain outside, body, mind and soul have all to be agglutinated into one. This Rammohun introduced into the new world as the modern outlook of man. The old ever renewed and the new ever reproducing but presenting the old in expanded forms, what is life but the spiritual current which flows on in increasing expanse? Thus, there is no finality to God's inspiration and no limit to man's expansion. God is ever working toward man and man toward God to compass the complete circle of the Divine purpose of creation.

One remark made of Rammohun is that he is the bridge that takes us from the mediaeval into the modern times. The function of a bridge is to bring over one into another—to unify and not to divide. Thus has the leading of India out of the mediaeval into the modern been provided by God in Rajah Rammohun Roy.

III
MAHARSHI DEVENDRANATH TAGORE *
(1927)

There is a Sanskrit verse the gist of which may be thus stated : numerous are they who claim to know the king, but very few are they whom the king knows ; likewise, large is the company of those who claim to have seen God, but extremely few are they to whom God has shown Himself. Herein is the plain, clear distinction between inferential knowledge and personal experience about God.

To the modern world, Maharshi Devendranath Tagore furnishes an outstanding example of a soul blessed with a direct perception, an intimate experience, an inward realisation of God through an impassioned, ecstatic union with Him. In that central circumstance lies the rare value of his God-possessed life. Let us endeavour, by means of a concrete example, to grasp the distinction above referred to between inferential *belief* in the *existence* of God and rapturous *enjoyment* of *communion* with God. A young student of philosophy comes across the Platonic dictum that ' God geometrises'. The

* Discourse during the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the Cantonment Brahma Samaj, Bangalore.

thought arrests attention. After the day's laborious studies, he strolls out into a meadow all aglow with the beauty of countless flowers in spring-tide. He examines one of the flowers and notes the symmetrical arrangement of the several whorls and the definite number of leaves in each. He observes, too, that every of the other flowers he scrutinises does present a like precision of arrangement. He now concludes that there is a clear design in Nature which argues a designing God. This is the philosopher — the observer, the knower. On the contrary, to one like Rabindranath, the poet-seer (the *vates*, as Carlyle has it), the same flower is a love-missive from the loving God to the beloved human soul, written in coloured ink on living enamel. Similarly, Emerson steps into his garden, sees a rose in radiant bloom and at once removes his hat with the reverent exclamation, 'Here is holy ground!' This is the seer — the enjoyer, the adorer. The observer reasons, argues, notices order and system, and concludes that creation has an Author. His pathway is 'from Nature up to Nature's God' through syllogism. The enjoyer has his heart wide open to the high visitations of God and receives, rejoices in, and adores, the 'Immortal Love for ever full, for ever flowing free'. He need not 'fix with mete and bound' the height and depth of the Supreme One. He knows — sees, feels and enjoys — Him as 'Love ineffable' to turn aside from Whom is hell, to walk with Whom is heaven. The God of the philosopher is the Contriver and Controller; the God of the seer is the Indweller and Inspirer. Said a philosopher of a seer (*sufi*): 'Whatever I know, he sees.' This appreciation may be replenished

with 'Where I descry, there he delights ; where I wonder, there he worships'. It is this intimate relation with God — manifest not merely in awakened consciousness but in abundant life and enraptured enjoyment — that distinguishes the seer.

In her profoundly illuminating Introduction to the *Spiritual Autobiography* of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, that renowned writer on Mysticism, Miss Evelyn Underhill, translates the title 'Maharshi' as 'Great saint'. But the idea is more that of the 'Great seer'. Certainly, the saint is the very embodiment of that calm serenity which we associate with, and locate in, God. The seer, on the contrary, is one who does not, like the saint, reflect and exemplify any particular aspect of the Godhead but enjoys direct vision as an immediate perceiver of the All-Holy. The seer is not he who breathes the Divine atmosphere but he who rays forth the light cast upon his spirit by the Central Luminary of all existence. To study the gradual unfolding of the sacred chapter of the great seer's entrancing ascent from stage to stage of excelsior flight into spiritual vision is to follow in the footsteps, to march in the wake, and to assimilate into one's own heart the experiences, of the God-illuminated one. This makes the life of Devendranath one of momentous importance to all seekers after God, even because he is one of the greatest religious geniuses this country has ever produced — truly, a successor of the hoary *rishis* of old.

Now, Maharshi Devendranath Tagore was the eldest son of one in whom there met two apparently

antagonistic characteristics. Prince Dwarakanath, as he was called, had been one of the foremost among the ardent admirers of Rajah Rammohun Roy. One main reason that had prompted his visit to Europe was to see that mausoleum in Bristol wherein rest the honoured remains of the Rajah. At the same time, that Croesus of Indian society was so wedded to secular preoccupations that he believed, much more than he realised, in 'success in life' according to the world's standards—success, not through loyal adherence to, and pursuit of, a strict and lofty ideal while leaving the result to Him who shapes all destinies, but in terms of the applause and appreciation of the vulgar many around. Thus, whereas he was touched with some degree of that light of Truth that shone with singular effulgence in Rammohun, he was careful enough to remain outside the pale within which the faithful lose themselves in the light. In the case of young Devendranath, swayed as he was, accordingly, by the pleasures of life under such influences, there was yet at the core of his being something which marked him out for a higher, purer and holier career than his environments would suggest. When only twelve or thirteen years of age, he had already become acquainted with Rammohun. And on the eve of that fateful departure for England in 1830, the Founder of the Brahma Samaj and the Patriarch and Parental Guardian of Modern India paid his farewell visit to the mansion of the Tagores and, seeking out young Devendranath, said to him, 'I bequeath my *gaddi* to you (to inherit my position as a spiritual teacher)'. How came he to say so? Here is

the distinction between reason and instinct : reason examines, proves and finds out what a thing is ; instinct shoots the X-ray through all obstacles and gets to the heart of the thing. Every great man is endowed with direct discernment in the light of this differentiation. It was by virtue of this insight that Rammohun at once discovered the rich potentialities that lay imbedded in young Devendranath's nature. At a later critical juncture, as we shall have occasion to notice, this association with the Rajah served as the reassuring report from outside for which the Maharshi panted in order to confirm the inner presentiment.

When Devendranath was eighteen, his grandmother fell ill and was about to die—the mother of the wealthy and high-placed Dwarakanath Tagore, then absent in Europe. The dying old lady was removed to the banks of the Ganges to expire within sight of the sacred waters. She lingered for a few days. On the night before that on which she was to pass away, Devendranath was seated upon a coarse mat near the shed in which she was hovering on the border-line between the two worlds. The river kept surging along—a visible symbol of the perennial march of time through generation after generation. Countless stars—witnesses to the power and purpose of the unseen Maker of the universe—were careering on as for untold ages gone by. The gentle breeze was blowing with the sweet offer of a caress at every point. The young man was thrown into a mood of sombre reflection. Then came a sudden burst of consciousness—'It is not this world

what is real ; pervading and yet transcending it, there is a Reality which whoso seeks and obtains a knowledge of by direct perception is alone blessed.' Every one has more or less experienced that situation when, in the dark night overcast with clouds, one oppressively feels how the world of sense is all but an immensity of unrelieved gloom and one has only to grope about one's steps, knowing not the content and composition of that in which nothing is perceived by the eye. But soon there comes a flash of lightning, and the world is bathed in a new illumination, and the beholder stands amazed and exclaims, 'Ah, is the world so multifariously rich as this ?' Somewhat similar is the predicament in the sphere of the life spiritual. We are enveloped in the midst of allurements and illusions. Truth is veiled ; and empty substitutes for Truth are accepted and treasured. Then comes the flash of Divine Light ; the eastern window of unearthly surprise is flung open ; and we see Reality as distinguished from semblance. This marks the starting-point of progress — the incoming of the Divine Spirit ; and, with it, the disclosure of Fact as differentiated from the fiction of life. This glimpsing of the Divine is what our scriptures call *Darsana*. After that, says Maharshi's *Autobiography*, it was idle, in his case, to talk any more of proofs of the existence of God. The eye of his soul had opened, and he had beheld the plenitude of God through a full, face-to-face apprehension of the Spiritual Universe. Later, though the surrounding gloom envelops the soul over again and the old despondence recurs at times, never more can there be the old

ignorance of the One Reality so visioned. Once seen, it abides as a vivid reminiscence no longer to be wiped out. Through God's abiding grace, such blessed moments are occasionally vouchsafed to many. In fact, the more learned and thoughtful ones among the writers on Mysticism lay particular stress on this circumstance, namely, that it is wrong to hold that the mystic vision is the prerogative of an elect few any more than is the possession of rational intelligence although what is called genius may be exhibited fully in limited instances alone. The mystic element is present in every soul. Not with the presumption of the converted but with the gratitude of the favoured is it given to any to say 'Unto me, too, has been vouchsafed somewhat of the glimpse Divine'. Moses goes up the mount and finds the bush burning — a flame to illumine, not to consume; to disclose a wealth of meaning, not to blast out life itself. Such experiences, we repeat, are not uncommon. Emerson has said that unto every mother the life of her child is a standing miracle. With what perception, keenness of insight and piercing vision does not the mother descry in the child those graces and beauties which to the casual observer remain sealed for ever! Further, if, as in Rabindranath's lyric, the child asks, 'Where had I been before I was born?', and the mother makes answer, 'Your loveliness was embosomed all in my heart', you recognise there the transcendence of spirit over the limitations of flesh. When, again, Lord Jesus enjoins, 'Suffer little children to come unto me', you see at once the mysticism surrounding, not the child whose ignorance you pity and whose helplessness you

endeavour to aid, but the child whose intimations of immortality make it a worthier denizen of heaven than those encrusted grown-ups over whom the world has gained thorough ascendancy. Or, take, again, the glory portrayed all over by the setting sun with that rosy and living radiance which makes you wonder that the sun, who appeared so forbidding while overhead, is now the parent of beauty and joy; and in that spectacle you behold even Him to whom Hafiz said, 'In the western horizon Thou art enthroned!'. Thus it is that the humdrum phenomena of daily routine come to help to arrest attention as so many telling evidences of the presence of God.

But then, this quickening stimulus disappears and this living sense fades after a time. There is the unveiling of beauty, but only to be hidden once again. And then sets in the torment of struggle. So young Devendranath's heart groaned when the vision withdrawn meant the loss of both the worlds for him. And from the depths of the darkness into which his soul was cast, he cried out, 'Oh, do Thou disclose Thyself over again'. The response came but by no means readily. For, by its own continued craving of hunger and thirst, the lorn soul must be content and prepared for long to realise the value of unrealised happiness. This is the second stage in the onward or upward progress. The person feels himself the most neglected, deserted and contemned of all the lonely ones on earth. All have their joys according to taste and temperament; but here is one destitute heart void of all peace or comfort! There arise

bitter questionings, 'Why should it be so?' The answer comes, 'Because you are not fit yet'. 'Then, why did it come at first?' 'Why, to warn you that unless you wake up, the whole purpose of life must and will fail. It came — this *nirhetukajayamanakataksham*, this gratuitous mercy — to call you to aliveness, to awareness. Hereafter, it will not be wanting either. Only, you must bring yourself to say, *Anyadhasaranam nashī, twameva saranam mama* (Other refuge have I none; Thou alone art my refuge)'. 'It was only to stimulate thy love that I once appeared before thee' — so Narada observed to Vyasa, referring to the first surprise of a profound experience of Reality, an abrupt perception of the Eternal Verity with its consequent transvaluation of values for the time being. Of the volcanic throb of unrest that agitated his vision-bereft soul, Maharshi says, 'I was so completely lost to all sense of satisfaction that I would not care to live; I became so absent-minded that I did not know when I had got up from my couch and taken my meals'. Now, there is a certain suggestion in this which we oftentimes manage to miss. How potent, how compelling, must be that spirit which creates the vision whose momentary glimpse casts into the dust all the interests of life! Such is the magnitude of achievement in itself. He who would attain it must first change from a creature of time into a pilgrim of eternity, not rejecting the world as a snare and a delusion but panting for that which gives to the world its rich and splendid significance. Hitherto playing with pebbles, believing them all the while to be jewels, he must henceforth find in every one of those pebbles

really an uncut diamond—a discovery possible only after the great Diamond has been beheld once in all its radiance.

One day, after his grandmother's death, Devendranath sat in his drawing-room and said to those around him, 'Today I have become a *kalpataru*. I am to give you anything that is in my power. Take it, by all means.' This practice of renunciation as part of the sustained hankering for God comes after *Darsana* and is designated by our teachers as a phase of the process of *Dhyana*. In the Fourth Chapter of the *Autobiography* we have a wonderful exposition of the *Dhyana* process in which Maharshi's whole spirit incessantly dwelt upon and dwelt with the Supreme Spirit. The first principle involved is that of Knowledge (*Jnana*), the lucid perception of Truth which says, 'Fancy not that things exist of themselves and you see them as such. Rather, in the perception there is not only the object seen and there is not only the subject seeing; but the seeing, knowing self sees and knows itself also as the seer and knower. With the knowledge of the outward world we come to know the inner self as well; and, furthermore, at the basis of knowledge and perception—the conjoint action of the percipient subject and the perceived object—there is Mind at work with an intelligent and intelligible design'. This is the first hint the seeker gets—namely, that the world seen is in reality the world rediscovered in God, and matter is not an outside something, and our own selves in relation to God are but prismatic mirrors in every exercise of the senses. We commonly believe that external objects are sending

intimations into the mind and that, therefore, the external world consists of objects outside the mind and there is nothing in the mind but what enters in through the senses. Later, however, to this last-named proposition there comes to be added the important, qualifying clause, 'Yes; unless it be the mind itself'. The mind constitutes the major factor in the formation of the various images. As we proceed, we see how, in designing this vast school of education for His children, God has so organised things that, in the very process of exercising their faculties, they are made to receive a fund of attendant enjoyment also. As Miss Cobbe puts it, if God's purpose in providing food were merely to satisfy hunger, why should He put taste and relish also into the palate? If we were to be endowed with the mere sense of touch, it would be enough to put into us the same power as that of the thermometer to measure up and register heat and cold; but wherefore also the concomitant tendencies of sensibility? In the impressive language of Dr. Martineau, physiologically a smile is but a twitch of the lip; but viewed through the lens of the heart, oh, what a revelation of genial love it is! A gentle stroke, likewise, is truly a message of in-felt tenderness. That is how the donations of God are all saturated with sweetness. Accordingly, the root of all religious experience is traceable to the knowledge of the self which, enshrined at the core of our being, gives to each faculty and function its purpose and its mission and so marshals together all those mobilised forces as to blend them into integral and enjoyable life. For, what is life, after all? Is it seeing,

hearing or moving? Nay; it is that assemblage of powers and potentialities which articulates and animates all such activities, itself being not their sum-total but the vital focus and the vivifying centre of them all. Extend the concept to God and the universe; and the latter becomes the very 'habit' of the former. Says Goethe, through the Earth-Spirit in *Faust*, in reference to Nature:

'Tis thus at the roaring Loom of Time I ply

And weave for God the garment thou seest Him by.' And so, on these lines, Maharshi worked out for himself principle after principle of the deeper, the inner life. The world is swayed by Wisdom. God is the Creator, not the Maker (potter-like, shaping pre-existent material). And as Wisdom designs and Will brings into being, so Love motivates both Wisdom and Will, impelling the one and inaugurating the other and shaping destinies in such wise that, stage by stage, they are unfolded into a beautiful picture of evolution. Thus viewed, what is 'evolution' but the gradual disclosure of the making, developing processes of the universe — and that, not to the cognisance of the Maker but to the understanding of man? Evolution is not itself the Maker but only the process of 'making'. The Maker comes to be unveiled more and more as we read each unrolled page of Nature, of History and Personality with increased knowledge and enlarged wisdom. And that God who is the Wisdom that suggests, the Will that shapes and the Love that sustains — He is the Adorable God. Worship, with its essence centred in the *Dhyanyoga* mentioned above, is no other than man seeing after God how entrancingly

beautiful is God's world, even as in the Bible it is said God first made the world and then rejoiced to find it beautiful! Worship is man putting on God and seeing the whole panorama of creation with the eye of God. Start with the beauty that resides in the world before you — the beauty of the truth, the wisdom and the goodness that are evermore revealed by the manifoldness of its shifting passages; and rise to the height of unstinted admiration, unmeasured affection and unabated attachment towards Him of whom all around proclaim, 'The hand that made us is Divine'. And then and there you assimilate the real spirit and the genuine mood of Worship, the soul of which lies in *Dhyana*.

Next, those who have mapped out the mystic life find its third stage in what is called *Sravanam*. As it floats through the immensities of time and space, the frail, isolated mote of the individual soul burns all too intensely with the resistless yearning, 'I must know that my experience is in accord with that of brother-souls.' So it listens wistfully for that voice of assurance from those whose kinship of spirit with itself seals and sanctifies the oneness of the entire race. To Devendranath this assurance was the memory of early association with Rammohun. Once again there came vividly to mind what he had before heard from and of Rammohun. As a boy, during the *Durgapuja* season, he had once been sent by his grandfather to Rammohun. 'Brother, what are you come for?' 'Dada invites you to see the *Puja* for these three days.' 'Me, brother? What have I to do with *Durgapuja*?' The little boy had

not realised then the significance of those words. But now, after all this lapse of time, the grown-up man understood it and became confirmed in the conviction that worship, rightly conceived, was worship in spirit and in truth alone. "Since then," states the *Autobiography*, "I inwardly resolved that, as Rammohun Roy did not take part in any image-worship or idolatry, so would I not join in them either." Thus, himself and that elder that had gone before him had had similar experiences. And when he remembered all that, it was no longer possible for anybody to allure him back into ceremonial worship. "I remembered Rammohun Roy — I came to my senses. I pledged myself heart and soul to follow in his footsteps". The first access of assurance thus received and acclaimed was soon reinforced by the higher oracle of the far-hoary past in the larger life of the nation. As he was engrossed in his thought of "the formless and changeless Deity", while his mind remained sorely depressed over the mass of idolatrous literature and practice in the land, one day, all of a sudden, he saw a stray sheet of paper pass fluttering by. Out of curiosity, he picked it up; but what it contained and meant he could not make out. He handed the page to Syama-charan Bhattacharya by his side with a request to decipher for him the meaning of the writing by the time of his return home from duty in the Union Bank. He got back home earlier than usual in the evening. Syamacharan Babu said, 'I find I can read the characters but cannot construe their import.' 'Who can make it out, then?' 'Ramachendra Vidyavagish, the Pandit-priest of the Brahma Sabha, could probably do it for

you'. Vidyavagish was accordingly sent for; and on reading the page, he said, "Why, this is *Isopanishad*." From him, Devendranath at once learnt the explanation of the opening words, '*Isavasyamidam sarvam*' (By God is all this indwelt); and new confirmation poured in: "Nectar from paradise streamed down upon me". This is how the blessed experience is described. And why? Because, not yesterday, not today, but centuries back, the *rishis* had declared the same Supreme Verity. And then, the verse, as it went on, ended with '*Thenathyak-thena bhunjeedha, magridhak kasyaswiddhanam*' (Enjoy that which He has given unto thee, and covet not another's possessions). Here is the consummation of my bliss: God has given Himself unto me; and what more do I want? Thus humanity verified and ratified the inmost experience of the individual. Ours, indeed, is direct perception. Yet we do not — dare not, need not — pretend we are the only persons that perceive. And therefore it is that *paramparyam* figures as a cardinal principle of the mystic faith. Not to me, not to you, not to India, but ever since the day on which a human eye opened upon this world and a human heart throbbed for something beyond the 'now' and the 'here' has this same vital experience reported itself 'forever down the ringing grooves of change'. It is, not man feeling after God, but God reaching forth unto man. A devotee among the Sufis prayed and prayed for twenty years together and finally exclaimed, 'I must give up prayer. God has not heard me through all this length of time!' But, as he was soon reminded, he was, in truth, only unconsciously inverting the order.

Unless God had first turned towards you, you would not have turned towards Him at all. Of this Maharshi gives a homely illustration which must come home to all. Here is a new-born babe — say, the youngling of an animal ; and you watch it with awe and reverence. How instinctively it turns to where the milk is deposited ! The mother's yearning to feed and the offspring's craving to be fed — which first, which next, you really cannot tell. There is the prompting on both sides. God has been making towards me. By the time I make one step, He has already made half-a-league. I am content with what He has given me ; but He is not. It is an occasion fraught with a feeling akin to that of worship when the calf is lying down and the cow is grazing beside, looking to her own creature-comforts and at intervals stopping short with a gentle low of invitation ; the little one springing up ; and both making toward each other, the calf to suck the milk and the cow to lick the skin, and both parting again, the cow to graze and the calf to gambol. Who has put all this into them ? It is the loving God who is thereby also the adorable God. To know Him as the loving God and not to adore Him is to exile oneself from the vast realm of His supreme sway. What more is needed than God's gift of Himself in worship ? This was Maharshi's new realisation — not surmise, not report, any longer ; but an experience which increasingly verified itself wherever he was and whithersoever he went. In fact, it became the breath of life for him to witness and realise the presence of God in all, through all and above all — to see Him within, see Him without and see Him where

He exists in Himself. And this put the new charm of a heavenly significance upon the whole world for him. He made Divine Fecundity the true, the sole objective of his soul's union in communion with God. And of the rare knowledge and love of God in him, the rich fruit came to be a more abundant life of self-consecration. His one life-mission he discovered in the establishment of the spiritual worship of the Supreme Being in this hapless land of gods many and lords many. He discarded idolatry not as an act of reform but as the very condition and credential of faithfulness to the *Parama Purusha*, the Supreme Person, to whom alone his soul's allegiance was due. That, for him, was the best means of preserving and perpetuating the deeper spirituality of his race as also of consolidating and carrying on the glorious work of Rammohun, his forerunner. And thus he proved himself a living embodiment of the spiritual capabilities of the new-old Faith.

Now, it is part of the scheme of Providence that, when a person feels his ground perfectly secure and himself completely blessed, there come trials and temptations to test the real measure of his strength. Consequently, Devendranath had his ordeal to face. He had joined the Brahmo Samaj and signed its Covenant of Spiritual Worship: he would not worship any created object nor bend his knee to any one but the Spirit-God. His father dies in London. The *sraddha* has to be performed. How is it to be done? His is among the foremost of the leading families in the City and in the Province. And all the heads of communities wonder and

enquire, 'What is he going to do, this eldest scion of the family?' 'I have signed the Brahmo Covenant. I will solemnly observe the occasion and perform the obsequies in accordance with the highest teachings of the Upanishads. But the *saligram* I cannot and will not bring in.' Girindranath Tagore, the younger brother, gravely says with bent head, 'Then, everybody will forsake us.' Ramnath Tagore, the uncle, grimly sounds the warning-note, 'Look here. Don't you make a fuss now, harping upon your Brahma.' Rajah Radhakanta Dev accords the advice of kindly solicitude, 'Go through the formality; and all will be well.' 'But I have once for all solemnly signed the Brahmo Covenant. How can I?' So he is in the very throes of excruciating anxiety about faithfulness to the sacred vow previously administered to him by the inner voice. While the whole prospect looms so unspeakably gloomy, he derives light and strength from three typical sources. The first is Prayer, in which he turns to God with the supplication, 'Oh, do Thou sustain me in this ordeal.' The effect is calm access to an exhaustless fund of unshakable fortitude under unerring guidance. About this, Maharshi himself says, "When a little boy, I used to sit in the lap of my *didima*, as she was seated against the window, and to have a look at the grand scenes before us. So, later on, I was in the lap of the *Didima* of my *didima* and against the window of the soul and through it beheld the glory of creation." Become a child before God and say, 'Thou art my Mother'; and then, what an inflow of strength! Keshub likens life to a journey by rail and observes, 'Only, if you would

travel safely, comfortably and inexpensively, do become a child. For, the child, covered by the veil of the mother and fed from the bosom of the mother, is really the ideal traveller—no luggage, no ticket, no seat but the lap of the mother.' The second source of strength is the Fellow-believer and Co-worshipper. Says Lala Hazarilal, 'You and I shall stand by each other.' Devendranath's grandfather, while on a pilgrimage to Brindavan, had picked up this Hazarilal as an orphan and fed and cherished him and set him up in life. But he sowed his wild oats in the wide city of Calcutta. Soon, however, the magnetic pull of *Brahmadharma* converted him into a prop and pillar of allegiance to the Samaj. Then, equally inspiring is the third source of strength—the 'vision' of the Mother. Devendranath was in a restless condition, half asleep and half awake in the night. Some one, he felt, stepped in and called him out of bed. They went forth together, leading and led. The spectral guide touched the front door of the courtyard; and the two wings flew open. They marched out into the street and mounted up to the sky through the encircling air. Behold, the full moon in quenchless light, and a grand city of marble, and the upper storey of a spacious road-side habitation! There he was made to sit in a chair. The phantom companion vanished. The door-curtain was seen gently drawing aside. And what was witnessed then? The enchanting, ennobling figure of his own departed mother appeared and said, 'Hast thou really become a *Brahmajnani*? *Kulam pavitram* ; *janani kritardha* ! (Sanctified is the family ; fulfilled is the mother's desire !)' The *sraddha*

day came round. Nothing of the customary ritual; but only *mantras* free from all association with idolatry, and the reading of *Kathopanishad*! And the next day, an outcaste! It is Emerson who says the spirit of God does not manifest itself to cowards. Since this first instance of a *sraddha* performed in accordance with the rites of *Brahmadharma*, followed by a renewal of the solemn declaration, 'I can never again join hands with idolatry'—since then the spirit of practical non-conformity has worked on and on in that noble family of the Tagores till, in the *Vande Mataram* agitation, we hear over again the stern avowal of Rabindranath that not the junior-most stripling of that stock shall ever be found participating in the worship of an idol.

The next trial with which Maharshi was faced in his spiritual career was at the age of thirty. With characteristic liberality, his father had run into debts beyond measure. In addition to the Zamindari Estate, the Firm of Carr, Tagore and Co. had been their chief business concern. Like the prudent man of the world that he was, Dwarakanath Tagore had taken away a substantial part of the family assets and constituted it into a separate 'trust' for his three sons so that it might not be touched by possible commercial complications. In course of time, the Firm, of which the three brothers had made themselves sole proprietors, was overtaken by a sudden crash. The liabilities amounted to a crore while the assets realisable came to but seventy lakhs of rupees. The creditors were called together and shown the accounts. The Attorney said to them, 'The

Proprietors are quite willing to add their own personal property towards making up the deficit. But there is a 'trust' property under protection, which you will not be able to touch.' At this point, Devendranath turns to Girindranath and says, 'Let us tell them that even the trust-property shall be given over to clear off the debts, and the family shall go into beggary as necessary'. As they hear this offer made out of his own freewill, the creditors are astounded and moved to tears. They take the whole property into their hands, form a committee of their principal men for its management and vote an annual allowance of Rs. 25,000 for the maintenance of the family. And yet the whilom minion of fortune would thenceforth be seen walking in the streets with slippers and tattered garments on under the severest of self-denying ordinances. And such was his integrity that even the promises of extravagant gifts on the part of his father were scrupulously redeemed in the end with interest. A mystic devotee in the West wanted to give up every thing and go forth into the world in absolute renunciation. His kinsman presses on him the counsel, 'Just take this half-crown piece with you.' 'Why', comes the ready remonstrance, 'you would not have me trust in God outright? Ah, let this half-crown go, too'. A young lady saw a vision; and she said, 'I will dedicate myself to God;' and she put on a horse-hair suit. Says the priest, 'You have golden ringlets; your hair is fine.' 'Oh, does it keep me from my God? Then, off it goes' And forthwith she scissored off her lovely locks. And there is a still loftier ideal—namely, not to renounce the world but so to use

it for others as not to depend upon it for oneself, much less be overpowered by it out of self-interest. Says the Man of God— '*Murd-e-Khuda*'—according to Saadi : 'Have I a single loaf ? One half of it shall go to the needy before I eat the other half.' So Maharshi went cheerfully into poverty and thanked his God that at last He had brought him to that pass. His sacramental act of world-renouncing and thus world-conquering sacrifice—his *viswajit yagnam*, as he termed it—was no mere self-renunciation but self-surrender.

After that, he became fully possessed by God, the God who was All-in-all to him. The Lord God being a jealous God, Emerson says, 'If Divine Energy come to you, let it come as a complete and no mere partial possession.' The Persian mystic avows, 'I am the veil. Remove it ; and you will see Allah.' As Maharshi abnegated self and all else beside, he saw God's own being with the eye, heard God's own voice through the ear and enjoyed God's own company in the consciousness. And this he did amid all his outgoings and incomings. He goes up the Himalayas, ascending to heights no human foot has hitherto reached ; and there, even there, he finds a prodigal wealth of floral beauty. There is no man to enjoy all that opulence of the sequestered scene. Then, what is it all spread out there for ? Maharshi's answer to himself is : 'Here, all this beauty is the self-expressing and self-enjoying presence of God'. After him, in later years, his inspired son sings : 'What is all the loveliness of the universe but the rich, ample present with which the Divine eternally woos the human soul ?' Maharshi said, 'I will retire, and enjoy my

God.' So he repaired to snow-clad summits and began to meditate upon God with every flowing breeze and imbibe Him through every inhaled breath. All other interests were rigorously excluded, even as his own favourite seer-singer, Hafiz, would say, 'Let no lamp be brought in, now that the full moon is upon me.' God, for him, was so intimately, inextricably inwoven into the universe that not only were all things enveloped in God but he enveloped all things with God. Every object, to him, was a token—a beaming sign, a beckoning symbol—of the presence of God, wherever he turned, whether towards the stars above or towards the meadows below. When at Amritsar, he enjoyed the *Arathi*, far otherwise than as others enjoyed it, while the chant went forth: 'In the disc of the sky, the sun and the moon shine out as lamps; the stars in their galaxy twinkle like pearls. The zephyr wafts incense; the winds wave as fans; and the woods are bright with floral offerings. Oh Saviour of the world, Thine *arathi* is wonderful, indeed! Loud sounds the drum (of the heart); and yet no hand doth beat!' Wherever he was, he was in the mood of worship—the worship of the 'Jagannath' of all the universe, not of Puri alone. That was a pilgrimage of the spirit that knew no limit of time or of place. Communion with the Supreme Being was the key to his whole being. 'Living eternal life in the midst of time', he made his union with God a rapt identification of self with the Self of the self. Nay, more; he passed from the Essential Life of *Union* to the Supersessential Life of *Unity* with the Unseen.

• And yet, God-absorbed contemplation did not proscribe or preclude humanity-loving service. World-denial was but a necessary stage of preparation for, and prelude to, world-renewal. Emerson distinguishes between two types of teachers—those who are possessors themselves and cannot help being givers also; and those who are mere professional reporters. Miss Underhill classifies mystics into two groups: those who enjoy the life of the spirit and are satisfied with their own enjoyment; and those who are moved by an impulse from within—which is the same as a compulsion from above—to go and help the world also to enjoy what they enjoy themselves. The true Sufi is he who says, ‘The light is lit in my heart; and this I shall go forth to the ends of the earth to declare.’ If creation itself is the self-donation of God, the soul, where it becomes God-possessed, cannot help becoming self-donating also, after its God. To this superb class of mystics belongs our Maharshi in this modern world. Looking down upon the mountain-stream, he hears an unseen voice whisper to him, ‘Thou art like unto that stream. Be not a recluse; but flow down into the plains; go and proclaim what thou hast seen and heard and enjoyed.’ Then follows at once the urge, ‘I have vowed to own no will but God’s. How dare I disobey His will as now impressed upon me?’ In the result, we have ~~the~~ happy dual life of contemplation and action, action and contemplation. Supernal rapture and beneficent labour thus flow on as parallel currents even as in Him who is alike restful and active through time and eternity. And the dedicated life proves and approves itself

as the accepted instrument wherewith the Supreme Artist would do some of his own creative and re-creative work among the children of men.

In truth, the whole life-story, a few broad aspects of which it has been our high privilege thus far to ponder with reverence, will be found to be one peculiarly replete with striking illustrations of happy exemption from the common exaggerations of mysticism. It is not merely, as we have just noticed, one more instance of the utter eradication of self-insulated self-interest even of the most spiritual kind. That, of course, is there as an integral part of the curriculum of the upper school of self-abandonment. But there is more, much more, still. Wordsworth said of other poets, 'They have sublimated matter away into spirit; but I have sanctified matter by interfusion with spirit.' This invests the wide world with sacred significance as the living temple of God in the light, not of what the head reports, but of what the heart has seen. Likewise, with his one authentic source of Divine wisdom in 'the pure heart filled with the light of intuitive knowledge,' Maharshi's mysticism would not refuse all reality, even relative reality, to the world of appearances. Again, while the pull of the Magnet of the universe kept drawing the whole being towards its eternal Home, an invincible separateness stood out in clear recognition as an irreducible factor in the closest union of love. There was, in the joy of the self-abnegation, none of the arrogance of a complete identification of the soul's substance with the absolute being of the Godhead. And as

with asceticism and acosmism, so was it with antinomianism. The inner voice was hailed and honoured throughout as a 'secondary personality' dictating all commands and directing all actions.

Such, roughly sketched, is the picture of the 'whole man' whose life, assuredly, forms an inestimable legacy unto us, one of the most 'life-giving lives' in the entire range of humanity. Blessed be the memory of this God-man, and blessed be the name of his God and our God for evermore !

Father and Mother ! We thank Thee and bless Thee for the light of the life Thou hast placed before us as a testimony to the possible experience of Thy presence in the hearts of all Thy children. Do Thou find Thy shrine in the spirit of each one of us. May we be illumined by the lustre of Thy Spirit spread over the whole of life ! Blessed, blessed, blessed be Thy name !

Om ! Thath Sath !

